



Title: The significance of inter racial conflict in the identity formation of BME young people

Name: Joan Bailey

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTER RACIAL CONFLICT IN THE IDENTITY FORMATION OF BME YOUNG PEOPLE

JOAN BAILEY

Professional Doctorate in Youth Justice

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTER RACIAL CONFLICT IN THE IDENTITY  
FORMATION OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC YOUNG PEOPLE

by

JOAN BAILEY

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Youth Justice

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTER RACIAL CONFLICT IN THE IDENTITY FORMATION OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC YOUNG PEOPLE

JOAN BAILEY

## **ABSTRACT**

Amidst growing concerns due to a rise in incidents of inter racial conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young men; this thesis draws on the concept of identity formation as an instigating factor in terms of why young people may get embroiled in conflict with other cultural groups.

Drawing on semi structured questionnaires with professionals and community workers, an ethnographic study with young people involved in or party to the incidents and a few in depth focus groups it explores the historical issues associated with the conflict, the development of identity and how and why this may be different for those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and how it can then materialise into conflict when threatened.

It aims to contribute to practice, knowledge and understanding of inter racial conflict and how the creation of positive identities can reduce these incidents. It also seeks to identify approaches and interventions most likely to be effective in addressing this which include working with parents, carers and the wider community who may carry some of the historical issues that allow the conflict to exist.

Findings point to identity formation being complex and multifaceted, which can be affected through personal and social experiences: many of these being different for young people from BME communities. Identity is fragile and can be shaped and changed through these experiences which can be compounded by interrelated needs and anxious backgrounds which can then manifest into behaviour that targets those that they may feel threatened by.

This study cites the importance of cultural specific responses and interventions which are holistic, informal and flexible to meet the distinct needs of not only young people but those that are influential in their lives. In addition it highlights the importance of work associated with identity formation and the creation of positive identities as a precursor to reducing conflict situations.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Youth Justice at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Joan Bailey

Signature:

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I miss you. Thank you for the legacy you left behind that inspires me to make every day count and to be everything you can. If I become half the woman you were I will have achieved great things in my life.

#### **Felicia – My daughter**

Thank you for being so honest with me even when I didn't want to hear and for being a hard task master. "Just get on with it" became her answer to all my excuses.

#### **Chris – My son**

For encouraging and cheering me on from the other end of the kitchen table while he pretended to be doing his homework; knowing full well that he could get away with it because I was so pre-occupied

## **ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

Chapter 1 maps out the social and historical context of inter racial conflict in the UK. It looks at the emergence of diverse communities and the policies that encourage and hinder the involvement of different faiths and cultures in terms of how they interact with each other. It introduces the concept of a social identity and the ways in which the quest for identity may create and intensify inter group conflicts and how this can become a precursor to offending as well as how it may divide communities and fracture community cohesion.

Chapter 2 is an extended literature review. It maps some of the history of antagonism that occurs between African Caribbean and South Asian individuals and groups: which may be embedded in historical events and discusses how these continue to exist in the present. It introduces a discussion on how adolescents develop both personally and socially, how identity is formed and how gender and sexuality affect these roles. It cites research to show how identity formation can be different for those from Black and Minority Ethnic cultures. It then highlights what type of impact this may have on both a local and national level in terms of incidents that occur between different cultural groups.

Chapter 3 revisits the emerging issues from the literature review and outlines how the research questions have been designed. The literature suggests that inter-racial conflict may play a key role in identity formation amongst disadvantaged BME adolescents and that when threatened by other cultural

groups this sense of identity may escalate into violence. The questions designed from this are formulated to explore the role of identity formation in inter racial conflict.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and methodology that was used to answer the research questions. These are discussed in depth and show the positive attributes of the models used and the reasoning for eliminating other methods of research. Ethical considerations arising from the study are explored and a debate on the limitations of the research is offered.

Chapter 5 outlines the process by which the research was carried out. It describes the research methods used: who they were used with and how many respondents were involved in the research. It analyses the methods and their relevance to the themes that have been drawn out from the literature review

Chapter 6 presents the data gathered from the semi structured interview with a number of professionals working in the town who are directly or indirectly engaging with young people involved in the conflicts. The main data gathered from the ethnographic study with young people across the two main communities involved in the conflict is also presented. This is supported with additional information from a number of focus groups and observations made at community meetings to hear residents' concerns about the ongoing conflict.

Chapter 7 discusses the emerging issues and the relevance of key findings from the research. The information collated is mapped against the research questions

to identify consistent themes that emerge from the data and the context in which these have become instrumental in identifying issues in the conflict situations that are occurring ,

Chapter 8 considers the implications of the research by presenting an overview of how identity and inter racial conflict may be intertwined in many situations. Conclusions are drawn together whilst considering how these are linked to the original aims and suggestions that might support tackling the issues in the present whilst questioning consequences for the future are put forward and discussed..

## **Chapter 1.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1968 the MP Enoch Powell gave what became known as his “Rivers of Blood” speech: calling for an immediate halt to immigration. He prophesied that by the end of the 20th century, 8% of Britain's population would be black or brown-skinned and a third of the residents of some cities would be non-white. The result, he said, would be a nation, “unimaginably wracked by dissension and violent disorder” (The Sterling Times, 1968).

Britain has been a major recipient of immigrants throughout its history and has arguably always been a multicultural society with people coming from Ireland and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A number of immigrants settled in Britain following the Second World War with many coming from Britain's former Empires in the Caribbean, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan; many at the invitation of the British Government to fill gaps at the lower end of the labour market. Many immigrants arriving at this time were highly visible in terms of their colour, race and religion. More recent arrivals in the UK including those from the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa, (Somalia and Ethiopia in particular) and former Yugoslavia have come from countries where persecution is common place and they have sought refugee status. In addition many immigrants have arrived in the UK from the EU Accession States. (Home Office, 2009)

Statistics from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2011) show that Britain's ethnic population has increased over the last ten years; demonstrating that the

Black and Minority Ethnic population increased by 37 per cent between 2001 and 2009. This signifies more than nine million people in England and Wales which is one in six of the population (ONS, 2011). These figures illustrate that the number of people from a racial minority living in Britain increased from 6.6 million in 2001 to 9.1 million in 2009 based on an escalation in immigration and birth rates. The sharpest increase amongst BME groups in these statistics is attributed to the Chinese racial group whose numbers have gone up by 8.6 per cent a year to 450,000. The number of Black Africans has also increased since 2001 going up by 300,000 or 6.2 per cent in a year. The rise in immigrants is largely attributed to people seeking asylum from Zimbabwe, Somalia, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Of the 20 local authority districts with the highest concentration of non-white ethnic minority groups, 16 are London boroughs. The ethnic minority population is a majority in Newham (61%) and Brent (55%) and is close to half the population in Tower Hamlets (49%). In terms of the non-London boroughs those with the highest percentages of ethnic minority populations as noted by the Home Office (2005a) are Slough (36%), Leicester (36%), Birmingham (30%) and Luton (28%)

Research undertaken by the University of Leeds (2010) predicts a total population of 78 million by the year 2051. It states that their prediction shows an "explosion in the birth rate of BME communities which will see the BME population rise from 8% to 20% over the next 40 years". It also states that Britain's white population will drop from 92% currently to 79%. The research used sophisticated computer modeling to predict future population growth



which they say is "largely due to a baby boom among black and ethnic minority communities, and a declining birth rate in the British white population" (Rees, 2010).

It is worth highlighting that in term of increased numbers of BME individuals the classification of those with dual heritage needs to be taken account of. The United Kingdom has one of the fastest growing mixed-race populations in the world which is fuelled by the continuing rise of inter-ethnic relationships. According to a major study of ethnic minorities published by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI, 2005) during the 1997 half of black men and a third of black women in relationships had a white partner. Mirza (2009) also revealed that other inter-racial relationships were flourishing with a fifth of Asian men and tenth of Asian women opting for a white partner. This is supported by data from the 2001 census which has confirmed that Britain has one of the highest rates in the world of inter-ethnic relationships and consequently mixed race people. This is again confirmed by figures published by the ONS in 2001 which revealed the number of mixed race people grew by more than 75% during the 1990s to around 415,000 which is equivalent to 10% of the total ethnic minority population in the UK.

No doubt if Powell were alive today he would say, "I told you so" and if we were to ask the British National Party (BNP) they too would be in total agreement with his concerns based on the increased numbers of migrants that have come to UK shores from BME groups. In terms of Powell's forecast of increased violence he might be surprised to learn this occurs more often than not between different non white racial groups rather than between whites and

other BME groups (Ministry of Justice, 2011) highlighting that crime is “complex and multi dimensional” (Lea & Young, 1988). As Pitts (2003) notes the 2001 national census indicates that:

“in England and Wales, 2.8% of the population is ‘Black’, 4.7% ‘Asian’ and 1.2% ‘Other’, in 2005 11% of murder victims were ‘Black’, 6% were ‘Asian’ and 3% were ‘Other’. Clearly, non-white populations are at greater risk of homicide than their White counterparts. A consideration of how these homicide victims died also reveals a marked variation, with 32% of Black victims being shot, compared with 10% of Asians and 5% of Whites”.

In 2005, overall criminal victimisation rates were similar for all racial groups, although significantly different in terms of the nature of the victimisation. Acts of intimidation and harassment aimed at ethnic minority individuals were quite commonly reported. More often than not this was manifested through social exclusion and deterioration of welfare to the ethnic groups subjected to it.

Hope (1994) argues that a key determinant in the distribution of victimisation is the redistribution of wealth and opportunity and that this is accompanied by social status. Whilst some sections of the BME population experience upward social mobility, considerable numbers experience downward mobility finding that they are living in high crime neighbourhoods. By 1995, 40% of African Caribbean’s and 59% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the UK were located in the poorest fifth of the population and living in the poorest neighbourhoods compared with 18 per cent of Whites (Burchardt, 2005).

These neighbourhoods experienced a change in the nature of violent crime and victimisation; many of these associated with knives and firearms which is confirmed by statistics showing an increase of offences by thirty percent

between the 2002 and 2003. A particular link to the increasing numbers of young people in many of these areas brought about a significant youth population. As the number of knives and firearms incidents increased the knock on effect was that more young people in inner city neighbourhoods acquired firearms to "defend themselves against increasingly frequent and apparently random 'respect' shootings" (Palmer and Pitts, 2006).

The Runnymede Trust Commission, (2000) talking about the future of multiethnic Britain said that, "Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities". Focusing on its multicultural and truly diverse character they discuss the benefits and challenges that this brings to Britain's shores. Different 'waves' of migration carry new cultural values and new skills into Britain; enriching and shaping the British culture we know today. It may however also bring with it intra-group and inter-group pressures along with challenges and conflicts between the generations as well as different races and ethnicities.

An increase in conflict situations amongst young people from different cultural groups was noted and whilst inter racial conflict amongst young people is not a new phenomenon in the UK it has gained media attention following the riots in the summer of 2001 in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley which involved large numbers of White and South Asian young people. The riots brought together numerous discussions across a diverse range of professionals and practices to debate the origins of this conflict and how it could be tackled (Smith, 2011).

Although inter-racial youth conflict in the UK has in the main existed between White and BME groups, more recently we have seen incidents involving conflict between groups of BME young people (Pitts, 2008). Examples of this have been the incidents which occurred in Luton (2003 and 2008) and Birmingham (2005) between African Caribbean and South Asian young people.

Whilst the government seeks to encourage communities to understand and be tolerant of difference; BME young people in particular often experience their attempts to establish their own identities and a place within British society as a competition with other ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1985). Negative perceptions of BME youth are fed by popular anxieties about guns, gangs and drugs as well as world events like 9/11 and 7/7 which serve to keep these young people in the media spotlight. Added to the riots in the northern parts of the country and the political activities of the BNP; New Labour developed a new framework for policy and practice in the UK around building cohesive communities (Home Office, 2001a; Worley, 2005).

The UK Government set out its strategy for increasing race equality and community cohesion in its document, 'Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society', The Government's strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion (Home Office, 2005b). It laid out an approach that would improve:

"fairness and opportunities for all in Britain; ensuring that a person's ethnicity is not a barrier to their success and foster the social cohesion necessary to enable people from minority and majority communities to work together for social and economic progress" (Home Office, 2005b).

Against increasing numbers of UK residents from minority groups; disadvantage amongst many BME groups existed disproportionately in Education, Housing, Health and Criminal Justice. In light of this, the document focuses on two key aims these being; improving life chances and building cohesive communities. The focus of improving life chances is outlined in the document as is increasing educational opportunities, treating health related diseases and preventing ill health through a better quality of life. In terms of building cohesive communities it aims to do this by recognising discrimination and ensuring that people are not treated unfairly because of race or religion and are enabled to make a full contribution to society.

Whilst the Government may wish to foster integration of its citizens and a diminished emphasis on racial difference in order to reduce conflict, there needs to also be some recognition of where this conflict may stem from. In BME groups unresolved tensions may be linked to racial and cultural differences and as such attacks the very core of whom and what they are in terms of their own identity.

In this thesis I argue that the formation of both personal and social identity can create and intensify inter ethnic group conflicts. This sense of identity can surface from recognition of difference which may not necessarily have any significance as stated by Horowitz (1985):

"ethnic conflict arises from the common evaluative significance accorded by the groups to the acknowledged group differences and then played out in rituals of affirmation and contradiction".

If we are to develop strategic responses to national concerns like youth conflict and building cohesive communities we need to embrace the experiences of BME communities. It is through focusing on the realities of individuals' inter racial experiences that it will be possible to truly understand the process of inter racial conflict and thereby have an understanding of how these conflicts occur and manage practice responses.

The thesis endeavours to locate the origins of the long-standing antagonisms between these racial and ethnic groups to show how present conflict within and between these groups' plays out in violent youth conflict on the street.

Utilising questionnaires to gather information from professionals, an ethnographic study and some focus groups, this thesis gathers data from young protagonists in these inter racial conflicts along with the views of adult observers. This data is used to develop an understanding of the role of inter-racial conflict in identity formation amongst African Caribbean and South Asian young people.

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## **Chapter 2.**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The thesis focuses on the violent conflict between two groups of BME young people in Luton utilising a case study approach. These confrontations have been occurring between African Caribbean and South Asian (primarily Bengali and Pakistani) young people for at least ten years. They reached a climax in 2003 when a young South Asian male died. Several others were injured in the subsequent "tit for tat", conflict following the incident. Since that time there have been sporadic outbreaks of violence instigated through verbal altercations or offensive gestures. These periodically result in violent confrontations leading to injuries. Accounts of these incidents over a long period of time are recorded in media reports, police incident reports and through professional work undertaken by a number of local organisations in the town.

A second series of high level incidents occurred in 2008 when African Caribbean homes in a mainly South Asian area of the town were targeted. The majority of these homes were owned by older members of the African Caribbean community who had purchased their homes in the early 60's when the area was predominately occupied by Irish and African Caribbean families who had settled there after gaining employment in the town. The Black community became incensed saying that the South Asian community wanted the houses of their parents and grandparents so they could move their own families into them or to extend their houses for their own growing families. The African Caribbean community demanded action saying that the police were not doing anything because the incidents were against their community and not a policing priority.

This ongoing unrest amongst the African Caribbean community prompted a number of community meetings and discussions with a diverse range of people across different community groups, organisations and professionals. It resulted in a number of actions one of which was the setting up of a Commission on Community Cohesion.

Using the accounts of young people who are both participants and observers from the two racial groups the thesis sets out to establish how the development of identity may contribute to this conflict and ultimately to consider practical solutions to address this. In focusing on this characteristic the thesis has required three main bodies of literature to be examined. These being:-

1. The social and historical context of inter racial conflict in the UK
2. The development of self and identity in adolescence
3. The role of identity in inter racial conflict for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people

In order to do this wide reading in relation to the themes above was undertaken with particular attention focused on young people, identity formation and inter racial conflict. This led to extensive information not only in the area being concentrated on but in other areas such as psychology and sociology. From this initial reading an inventory of key words was populated. A search was then undertaken via the Athens gateway which produced initially a broad collection of appropriate material which was then tapered down. A simultaneous exercise was completed by using Google Scholar. Both searches



produced initially several thousand sources of information which had to be reduced several times until a manageable number of articles could be utilised. Reducing the initial source to a controllable amount of material was done by weeding down using robust procedure. This included discarding material that had not been in circulation for a number of years, material where there were multiple copies of older editions, outdated volumes of referenced works, obsolete or inaccurate materials.

There are few academic publications relating to inter racial conflict in the UK but a more diverse and extensive array of articles was available internationally; primarily in the USA. It became clear however that there was extensive literature associated with community cohesion, young people, race, crime and offending. The researcher found it very easy to be led in a number of directions because large amounts of the literature would mention the topics being investigated as part of another subject and as such believed initially that bringing these topics into the discussion would be beneficial. This however proved to be problematic and watered down the quality of the documents being prioritised.

To address this difficulty the researcher had to refocus numerous times to ensure the systematic collection of data pertinent to the area of research. This was done through a critical and in depth evaluation using the methods mentioned and ensuring that those retained were primary research material.

Each of the remaining articles was then considered in terms of relevance to the research question which resulted in an even more manageable amount of material. These were then sifted through to identify articles that were unbiased and objective. The topic is sensitive one and there were a number of articles that the researcher felt were useful but needed to appreciate that the author had a particular view. Material was scrutinised for accuracy and reliability in term of the research and whether the findings were vigorous.

A second check of the articles was undertaken to ensure that the final selection related to the initial themes and that the researcher had not digressed in her collection due to the overwhelming amount of material gathered initially. These were then grouped to match the themes related to the social and historical context of inter racial conflict in the UK; the development of self and identity in adolescence and the role of identity in inter racial conflict for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people.

Maintaining this focus would not only ensure that the literature review did not drift but the emerging questions would be clear and succinct and by using this approach the data eventually used for the literature review was more relevant to the thesis subject. To ensure that no useful information had been overlooked the discarded materials at this stage were maintained separately as reference points for any issues that might emerge at a later stage.

During the period of the research and the subsequent writing up the researcher continuously monitored pertinent bulletins, websites and media reports to maintain awareness of the latest developments in the area being written about.

## **2.1 The social and historical context of inter racial conflict in the UK**

In the UK over at least the last two decades, intense conflict between different ethnic groups has created a range of social problems. The history of slavery, conquest, exploitation and war have played a part in the “most extreme manifestations of inter group conflict” (Jesum et al, 2001). Whilst violent conflict amongst lower class young people is not uncommon (Pearson, 2001) it is usually patterned and has its origins, not merely in the psychological make-up of the protagonists but in specific historical and local antagonisms. This thesis considers the origins and impact of conflict between the two groups of BME young people identified previously.

Inter racial conflict is not a new phenomenon and has occurred across the globe at different times in history; most notably perhaps in the USA in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is important however to bear in mind that the origins of inter racial conflict in the USA are distinctive. The legacy of slavery, the civil war and the north – south divide, along with the peculiar nature of intra group relationships in American cities have all played a part (Hagedorn, 1998). As noted previously this has occurred largely between White and African American groups until in the post war period when we see the emergence of a broader range of cultural and religious groups involved in inter racial conflict.

The UK too has experienced inter racial conflict associated with the migration of diverse racial and ethnic groups. To understand the issues associated with inter racial conflict there must be an understanding of the history of these groups, the capacity in which they migrated to the UK and their lived experiences. These play a significant part in the relationship they have with the country and others that have chosen to live here.

The UK has a long history of migration. Peter Ackroyd's (2000) monumental *London: The Biography*; describes the long history of a city of assorted immigrants who had populated London by the 10th century. By the late twelfth century locals throughout Britain complained that all sorts of foreigners were practising their own customs and by the early sixteenth century the UK had its first experiences of inter racial conflict in which riots took place and the shops and homes of those considered to be "foreigners" were burnt.

As mentioned previously the Irish and the Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries comprised noteworthy migrant movements; however a key feature of the changing diversity of Britain has been since the Second World War. Before this there were very few Black and even fewer Asian people in Britain itself although many Black and Asian men from the colonies served in the British armed forces during the war. After the Second World War, the 1948 British Nationality Act gave all 800 million people in the Commonwealth the right to claim British citizenship. This meant that they could come and live in Britain – the 'mother country' – without any visa requirements. There were no government controls or restrictions on immigration from the Commonwealth

until 1962. From the mid-1950s until 1961, around 30,000 people a year were emigrating from the 'New Commonwealth' to Britain.

These migrations brought people from the former British colonies who had come initially with all the civil, political and social rights associated with UK citizens which they were able to hold; mostly under post-colonial arrangements (Hansen and Weil, 2001). As time developed new Immigration laws were implemented; many of these focussing on limits related to entry into the UK.

These restrictions have been complex and there have been immense debates about the way that these processes have affected societies and cultures (Blunt and Wills, 2000). There are different types of post colonialisms as identified by Sidaway (2000). He identifies two frequent uses of the term 'post colonialism', saying that the:

"first of these relates to successor states, or those societal formations that arose following formal independence from a colonial occupier. The second sense refers to those colonizing forces that arose after official colonialism. This could be either internal colonizing forms of rule by particular ethnic, identity, or class groups, or it could refer to the colonizing discourses that arose after colonialism proper but retain a colonial character".

In 1948 almost 400 African Caribbeans' arrived on the SS Empire Windrush in search of work. The arrival of the Empire Windrush with mostly Jamaican men on board on 22 June 1948 at Tilbury Docks has been regarded as "an important landmark in the history of modern Britain" (Phillips, 2005). In 1949 the Royal Commission on Population recommended that:

"Immigration into Britain should be welcomed 'without reserve' but only on the condition that the migrants were of good stock and were not prevented by their race or religion from inter marrying with the host population and becoming merged into it".

During the 1950s and 1960s almost all immigrants came from colonies or Commonwealth countries; having been invited by British employers after the Second World War, to fill working class jobs vacated by an upwardly mobile indigenous workforce. Irrespective of what racist attitudes they may have had the need for labour and maintaining workforce production took priority; even though the initial experiences of many Blacks and South Asians were negative due to their encounter with racist attitudes. They faced many difficulties in getting decent jobs and experienced discrimination in acquiring housing. The "discrimination and prejudices they faced was even aggravated due to resentment of miscegenation" (Pilkington, 1998).

These experiences have played a part in the development of their lives in the UK and as such will have also affected the way in which their stories are shared with others. Acts of intimidation and harassment aimed at ethnic minority individuals are quite commonly reported and "these bear high social costs, and discourage long term integration", and it will "often manifest itself through social exclusion and deterioration of welfare of the ethnic groups subjected to it" (Karlsen and Nazroo, 2003).

The majority of African Caribbean people migrating to the UK settled in the London area although many others went to places like Birmingham and Manchester. In London most of them found poor housing in and around the slum areas; one of these being Notting Hill in North Kensington, where in the 1950's many people from Caribbean islands had settled. As the African Caribbean community grew white families in the locality found they were competing for housing. Young White working-class 'Teddy Boys' began to turn

hostile towards the growing numbers of Black families in the area and Right Wing groups like the (BNP) and the League of Empire Loyalists began to exploit the situation holding street corner meetings and distributing material that promoted 'Keep Britain White' (Barker, 1982; Boothroyd, 2001).

Sir Oswald Mosley's Union Movement; one of the biggest and most influential extreme right wing groups at that time "advocated the repatriation of all the African Caribbeans" (Pilkington, 1996). The party held regular meetings in deprived urban areas such as Notting Hill where most of the African Caribbeans' had settled. Here Mosley held speeches calling white men to act and drive Blacks out of Britain (Deckard, 2009). These rallies were well attended in particular by members of the Teddy Boys who could be "easily agitated" (Pilkington, 1996).

During the summer of 1958 gangs of Teddy Boys became increasingly open about their feelings about their Black neighbours. They smashed Caribbean cafés and harassed individuals. On the morning of 24 August, nine White youths assaulted five Black men in separate incidents in Shepherd's Bush and Notting Hill; seriously injuring three of them. This resulted in one of the UK's worst experience of racial violence where rioting broke out every night in that part of West London throughout late August and early September. Mobs broke shop windows and fought with police trying to restore order (Fryer, 1984).

Travis (2002) notes that:

"the disturbances were overwhelmingly triggered by 300 to 400 strong "Keep Britain White" mobs, many of them Teddy boys armed with iron bars, butcher's knives and weighted leather belts, who went "nigger-hunting" among the African Caribbean residents of Notting Hill and Notting Dale".

The police eventually reasserted control and the disorder died out on the 5<sup>th</sup> September of that year. The Metropolitan Police arrested over 140 people during the two weeks of the disturbances, mostly white youths but also many Black people found carrying weapons. A report to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner stated that "of the 108 people charged with crimes such as grievous bodily harm, affray, rioting and possessing offensive weapons; 72 were white and 36 were black" (Skinner, 1999).

A decade or so later South Asian people who had arrived in the second wave of migration were also experiencing incidents of racism. Settling in areas like Bradford, Leicester, the East of London and Birmingham they experienced confrontation with white males (Sivanandan, 1982). The earliest of these incidents; recorded in 1976, resulted in Gurdip Singh Chaggar being murdered by racists. This led to the formation of the Southall Youth Movement which was subsequently followed by a number of other youth movements in Bolton and Blackburn; the Asian Youth Movement in Bradford; the Asian Action Group in Haringey and the Asian Youth Movement with branches in Leicester and Manchester (Ramamurthy, 2006; Rose, 1976).

Following the death of Aftab Ali in Brick Lane during 1980, a number of youth movements were formed in London:

"What started out as attacks by white youths on Asian families in the late 1970s in the Northern cities and areas of South Asian settlement in London's East End, had developed, by the 1980s, into a fierce and protracted 'fight-back' against the White young men who had taken to 'marching' through their neighbourhoods throwing missiles at their flats and houses and abusing or assaulting any Asian residents unfortunate enough to be on the streets" (Angel, 2008).



He goes on to say that:

"The 'fightback' in East London was spearheaded by South Asian 'gang' members from the *Brick Lane Mafia* the *Cannon Street Posse* the *Stepney Green Posse* and the *Bow Massive* of Tower Hamlets. In north London the *Drummond Street Boys* headed it up while in Newham, Forest Gate, Redbridge and Waltham Forest the *Paki Panthers* were the activists" (2008)

In July 1981 twelve young people were arrested in Bradford and were later charged with possession of explosives and conspiracy (Gilroy, 1982; Ramamurthy, 2006). They were all members of the United Black Youth League who had supported Anwar Ditta in her struggle to be united with her children as well as Jaswinder Kaur and many others in their fight against deportation. These incidents were all seen as police harassment of black youth in which the young men; seen as 'sons of the community' as described by Ruth Bundy, one of their solicitors were instrumental in motivating one of the most powerful social justice campaigns of the 1980s. One of the 12; Tariq Mehmood said at the trial:

"It was July the 11<sup>th</sup> 1981 and that was the day where there were lots and lots of riots up and down the country, in lots of different places. We heard rumours that the NF, or skinheads...the fascists were coming to Bradford and the police had gone round and said that and they told everybody to stay indoors. Now we took the view that it's totally wrong. We're not going to stay indoors, we're going to get out and we're going to organize people" (Ramamurthy, 2006)

Another of the 12, Safeed Husain said later in an interview:

"Yes we actually won the trial but the real victory was that the Black communities actually demonstrated that they had a right to defend themselves. And I guess that was taken up by other parts of the country as well. Sadly I think that no longer is the case. I think we've moved to a new era, a new way of doing, a new level of oppression. But the principle I think still exists; it's still there" (Ramamurthy, 2006)

The experience of racism continued for many people from these two racial groups and in many cases these would become confrontational and turn into violence. During the late 70's to early 80's a number of incidents that occurred included individuals from both groups who would band together in order to support each other against the white racists (Modood et al, 1994; Hewitt, 1986; Dawson et al, 2006). Whilst many of these incidents made the national news, many more didn't; most of which were managed at a local level. An example of this being the violent confrontations in Thurrock during the early eighties when the Tilbury Trojans (a group originating in the 1960's as a white skinhead movement and considered to be one of the most notorious skinhead groups in the UK) targeted Blacks and Asians in the locality. Whilst racist incidents against these two specific BME groups often made news headlines (Watt, 1998; Rex, 1982) but there were numerous local incidents that did not reach the media spotlight.

The changes that took place within the UK economy under the Conservatives during the 1980s and 1990s created deep divisions within the working class, dis-embedding cultural identities rooted in occupational cultures and eroding traditional sources of solidarity and common identification (Walker, 1987).

A survey undertaken in 1982 found that 53 per cent of British Caribbean's and 51 per cent of British Asians had said things "had got worse for them over the previous five years". While the economic recession was the main reason for this, "41 per cent of Caribbean's and 49 per cent of Asians said racism was the reason" (Brown, 1984).

In 1988 Salman Rushdie published his novel *The Satanic Verses* which infuriated those in the Islamic world. In Islamabad, protests led to the deaths of five people and Ayatollah Khomeini issuing a fatwa sentencing Rushdie to death; which resulted in him going into hiding. Many commentators have argued that the Rushdie affair marked a watershed in both British Islamic politics and relations between the Islamic community and the British state (Angel, 2009; Smith, 2001; Malik, 2005; Phillips, 2005). Malik (2005) argues that the Rushdie affair gave rise to the merging of Islamic radicalism and religion saying that:

“Today 'radical' in an Islamic context means someone who espouses a fundamentalist theology. Twenty years ago it meant the opposite: a secularist who challenged the power of the mosques within Muslim communities. The expunging of that radical secularist tradition has played an important part in the rise of Islamic militancy in this country and against the mosque. Now, fired by resentment at the apparent insult by the Rushdie book, they became transformed into religious radicals and formed the pool of discontents for militant Islamic groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, which began organising in Britain, particularly on campus, in the late Eighties and early Nineties”.

Media coverage of the Rushdie Affair, along with the Gulf War had an increase on negative attitudes towards Muslims and a many young people felt threatened about their culture and their identity, there was an increase of young people turning inward towards their community leaders and the mosques for support and solidarity (Ghuman, 1994).

Over the past twenty years immigration and ultimately the diversity of the UK has changed considerably. Since the early 1990s there has been a marked rise in immigration and an increase in the number of countries that new arrivals

have come from. These changes have taken place in the same period that there have been no less than six Parliamentary measures; the Asylum and Immigration Acts of 1993, 1996, 1999, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005.

UK Immigration laws have come under heavy criticism in the debate about race and the BME experience of racism. The 1965 Race Relations Act was followed by a range of legislation under the Labour Government that was aimed at reducing immigration. These were implemented almost immediately after Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968. The 1971 Immigration Act was aimed at slowing down immigration by restricting the 'Right of Abode' to those who a parent or grandparent based in the UK. The almost immediate result of this was the effect it had on the thousands of Asians who came to settle in the UK after being excluded from Uganda by Idi Amin.

The Race Relations Act of 1976 brought in the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 which made institutional racism unlawful. The outcome of the MacPherson Inquiry in 1998 and the subsequent report a year later focussed on the way in which the police handled the murder of Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 and was instrumental in the 2000 Amendment which recognised the challenges of Institutional Racism. The 2000 Race Relations Amendment Act was introduced to extend further the application of the Race Relations Act of 1976 to the police and other public authorities and to specifically include discrimination by the police:

"Britain is therefore clearly strong on anti-discrimination laws, but nonetheless it can be argued that it remains a deeply divided and racist society, caught up in the paradox of human rights laws and counter human rights laws that is generated between its foreign policy and anti terrorism laws" (Hutchinson, 2008).

Modood (2005) says that:

"Much of these contradictions in equality and diversity in Britain can be explained in terms of the aggressive policy that was established by New Labour under Tony Blair".

Modood (2005) goes on to say that:

"The New Labour New Life for Britain Manifesto of 'New Labour', as it was dubbed by Blair, included promises to introduce the Freedom of Information Act and the UK Human Rights Act, the latter to give a distinctive interpretation to the European Convention on Human Rights.

In the year 2000 the Human Rights Act was implemented however the UK has only statutes which mean that the government can change them in times of 'serious need' and 'emergency', as for example during the contentious 'War on Terror'. Modood says:

"The Equality and Diversity legislation operates within a paradoxical constitutional framework; the very people who are protected from discrimination can also randomly and by default become the targeted. The Single Equality Bill that was published in 2007, which came into effect in the Single Equality Duty of 2008, even seems a shift away from the big victories gained in 1976 and 2000 respectively, especially as it is throttled by the recent anti- and counter-Terrorism laws, and their connected Asylum and Immigration laws of the last two years. The latter are explicitly aimed at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities" (2005).

The Immigration and Asylum Acts of 2002 and 2006 have introduced stricter immigration control regarding entering and remaining in the UK, rules around deportation, and rights associated with appeals and resulting penalties. A criticism of these Acts is that they allowed the Labour government to pull out

from support given to unsuccessful asylum seeking families with dependent children. These control measures aimed at refugees and asylum seekers are further reinforced through the UK Borders Act 2007.

The Terrorism Act 2006 specifically aims to 'make it more difficult for extremists to abuse the freedoms we value.' In the post-Iraq and 7/7 environment members of the public are more likely inclined to associate 'extremists' with 'Asians' and even more so with Muslims.

The Equality Act 2010 focussed predominately on disability discrimination at the expense of race and talked about a common national and inclusive identity that supposedly knows no colour, religion, faith or class.

Changes in Immigration Laws and the desire to implement legislation that deals with race issues have not all been successful in promoting an inclusive and embracing UK. If anything they have had negative effects and are often implemented against the backdrop of political desires.

### **Divisions within the Brotherhood – Social Mobility**

This section focuses on inter ethnic relations of young people from the African Caribbean and South Asian community, however to debate the experience of inter racial conflict some reference must be made to intra group dynamics; which can cause other conflicts associated with upward and downward social mobility within these groups. Social mobility can refer to horizontal mobility – moving from one position to another within the same level, or to vertical mobility – moving from one social level to another (Habil 2008) This upward or downward mobility can and although not exclusively, is often linked as identified by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP):

“Social capital, cultural capital, early years influence, education, employments and labour market influence, health and wellbeing and are biased influences” (2007)

Robinson (1990) tells us that:

"Most black people experienced downward social mobility as a result of migration.....Many of those who had held white collar positions in either India or the Caribbean have had to gain upward mobility simply in order to re-establish the positions they possessed prior to coming to the England".

Loury et al (2005) agree that social mobility is not a "single, homogenous phenomenon but a cluster of independent processes", but states that most studies of social mobility come from:

"the perspective of an individual endowed with particular skills and capital or by examining how individuals are able to transfer their status across the generations to others within their families or their racial or ethnic group" (Loury et al, 2005).

They believe that the experience of race and ethnicity is also an instigating factor that may have an effect on specific groups in terms of upward mobility. This can be through experiences and attitudes in areas like employment, education and training.

Social mobility is however experienced differently within these two specific communities. Modood (2007) says that while African Caribbeans' have "achieved far inferior social mobility" than those from the South Asian community; they are more "widely accepted as being at the core of modern British identity... than those from the Indian subcontinent". He goes on to say that whilst the "socioeconomic position of the Caribbean population seems disadvantaged compared to many other minority groups; there is evidence of significant upward mobility in the areas of housing tenure and suburbanisation".

At the beginning of the immigration movement in 1961 African Caribbeans' were excluded from social housing and forced into privately rented accommodation where they "were an exploited class at the mercy of racist private landlords" (Glass and Westergaard, 1965). As such many were forced into home buying. The 1981 census showed that 45 percent of Caribbean born headed households were owner occupied and whilst approximately the same percentage were in social housing many went on to purchase their council owned properties.

Social mobility is also intrinsically linked to family and family structure. Over the last decade the changing nature of families, from their economic wealth through to individual responsibilities have been influential in terms of social mobility.

In the 2001 census among all families those headed by a person of a non-white ethnic background were much more likely than white families to have children living with them. Nearly 80% of Bangladeshi families had dependent children compared to just 40% of white families. Bangladeshi and Pakistani families tend to be larger than families of any other ethnic group. Mixed, Black Caribbean and White families with dependent children had the largest proportion of cohabiting couples where cohabitation is less usual amongst Asian and Chinese populations. In turn over 45% of Black Caribbean, Black African and mixed families were headed by a lone parent compared with 25% of white families.

Berthoud (2005) says that:

"the Caribbean family, in the traditional sense of a Caribbean man married to a Caribbean woman, may be dying out, in contrast with



South Asians who remain strongly adhered to old-fashioned values with very few people cohabiting from an Asian ethnic background”.

Amongst many South Asian families there is much more sharing of the home across three generations; often in the form of common housekeeping.

“Multi-generational ties, both within and beyond households, have particular resonance amongst South Asian families, in which couples continue to live with their parents after starting their own families. For example, around two-thirds of British resident Indian elders live with one of their adult children, compared with just 15% of white elders” (Berthoud, 2005).

The experiences of children within these families will as identified by the DWP have an early influence on them and then an impact on their future development. Linked with the ability and opportunities to achieve this may determine their position in terms of upward or downward mobility.

### **Divisions within the Brotherhood - Solidarity**

The history of African Caribbean and South Asian communities in Britain since the Second World War has very much been about a struggle against racism and marginalisation. Many of the first generation migrants from the Caribbean and the Indian sub continent came with nostalgic memories of their homelands and the desire to create a better life for themselves and their children. In the 1970's young Black and Asian people rallied around the political term Black in order to deal with and oppose racism. By the later part of the 1980's the solidarity that existed between these two groups became fractured; although no specific item can be attributed to this.

It seems that solidarity occurs as part of a resistance to racism. When there is a common enemy as in white racists those affected are able to unite; however in

the absence of this 'common enemy' they appear to turn inward looking to what is different. This outward and inward looking is fluid and can be shifted by external forces. Johnson and Duberley (2003) identified the ongoing struggles of Blacks and Chicanos in Los Angeles over a period of time which:

"created both moments and movements in which Blacks and Chicanos have unmasked power imbalances, sought recognition, and forged solidarities by embracing the strategies, cultures, and politics of each others' experiences".

In more recent years events of inter group conflict directed at those from BME individuals or groups have been by other BME individuals or groups. These incidents of inter racial conflict have gained media attention due to the involvement of large numbers of young people from different BME groups and often because of large scale violence occasionally resulting in the deaths of some participants.

In the main most of these incidents have involved those young people from African Caribbean and South Asian groups and it is for this reason that this thesis has identified them as a case study for analysing inter racial conflict and determining actions that can be used to resolve this conflict (Watt, 1998; Alexander, 2004; Madood et al, 1997).

Racially motivated comments once associated with those from far-right white groups were now being used by BME groups directed at the other. They began speaking about new migrants in the same way that they were spoken about in the past. What has happened is that many of the 'oppressed' have become the 'oppressors' (Frieire, 2004).

Often small altercations spark more serious fighting which bring friends and family members into these disagreements. Two of the most publicised cases of conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young people which are pertinent to this thesis occurred in Luton in 2003 and Birmingham in 2005. When studied in depth there is information available to show that there is a long history of conflict between these two groups in both these areas.

In the Luton case an incident took place on August 20th 2003 in the vicinity of the fun fair being hosted in Wardown Park. The evidence in this case shows that the attack mounted on Kamran Shezad and others was not random. It was a reprisal attack arising from fighting which took place an hour earlier in which Kamran was one of a group who assaulted a small number of young African Caribbean boys following a verbal altercation.

Prior to the attack in the park a number of phone calls were made from the fair summoning assistance and as a result a number of older black youths arrived with weapons including baseball bats, knives and crutches. They entered the fair seeking revenge for the earlier incident and split up chasing several youths in different directions (Bedfordshire Police, 2003).

Kamran received a number of injuries including cuts to his back and wrist. The sole cause of his death was a single stab wound to the thigh which severed the femoral artery resulting in fatal blood loss. Tragically he died nine days later in hospital despite all attempts by medical staff to save him. Detective Inspector Andrew Richer (Bedfordshire Police, 2003) said the investigation was initially hampered by "there being no eye witnesses who are able to identify any person who was in the group that chased after Kamran". However during the

investigation more than 50 people were questioned which resulted in 1,800 statements taken from witnesses and 5,000 exhibits seized and examined. Finally in 2005 nine African Caribbean young men were convicted for a variety of offences but not murder.

The arrest, trial and sentencing of the African Caribbean young men served only to further divide the South Asian and African Caribbean communities to a point where daily verbal altercations between young people from the two communities became commonplace. Some of this was fuelled by a perception of injustice. The African Caribbean community believed that they were being made scapegoats for a series of incidents in which members of both groups had been aggressors (Bailey, 2004 and 2005).

The sentencing in 2005 led to an increase in these incidents as the South Asian community demonstrated their disgust for the outcome of the long trial around the death of Kamran. On the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2005 the following individuals were named and shamed in the local paper for the following offences.

Emmanuel L'Anglais, 18, of Luton, manslaughter  
Andrew Morrison, 20, of Luton, violent disorder  
Andre Henry, 21, of Luton, violent disorder  
Darren Burton, 21, of Luton, violent disorder  
Neil Campbell, 22, of Luton, violent disorder  
Leon Gittens, 18, of Luton, conspiracy to commit violent disorder  
Leroy Hurd, 19, of Luton, violent disorder  
A 17-year-old London youth, violent disorder  
A 17-year-old Luton youth, violent disorder

(Bedfordshire Police 2005)

Emanuel L'Anglais was charged with manslaughter and was released from jail in April 2005 and the rest were out well before him as they had been held on remand. Kamran's father said that "Their sentences are over but ours will never

end” (Shezad, 2005). The South Asian community rallied around Kamran’s father whilst the African Caribbean community displayed outrage at the way they had been treated believing all the blame had been placed at their door even though they had not been initiators of the original incident.

The Birmingham riots of 2005 took place on the nights of October 22nd and 23rd in the Lozells area. An alleged gang rape of a teenage black girl by a group of Pakistani Muslim men sparked the riot which involved groups of African Caribbean and Asian men. Although no evidence was found to support the allegation the riots caused the deaths of two men; 23-year-old Isaiah Young-Sam and 18 year old Aaron James plus a number of other shootings and several stabbings (BBC News on Line 2005).

Following the Birmingham (Lozells) incident Lee Jasper, the policy director for equalities and policing for the Mayor of London said:

“The recent riot in Birmingham has shown the need for unity between African Caribbean and Asian communities and has starkly exposed the gross racial inequalities suffered by both communities” (Oct 2005).

He asked that there be:

“a recognition and acknowledgement of these very real concerns and tensions and that youth groups, mosques, temples, churches and community organisations ... engage... in serious dialogue to gain an understanding of the issues that gave rise to these terrible events” (Jasper, 2005)

The ensuing debate latched onto questions of culture and the way that different groups interacted rather than questions of history, discrimination and deprivation. Once again these more challenging issues were sidelined.

As Bardhan (2005) has observed:

"it is not uncommon to see communities sharing some historical animosities coexisting peacefully [...] for generations (Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, for example) and then something snaps and inter-community violence erupts. Understanding these eruptions requires us to go beyond pointing to primordial antagonisms, but examine the nature of that crucial "something," and see if it can be placed within some meaningful framework" (2005)

Darcus Howe (2004) the veteran race campaigner and broadcaster says, African Caribbean's and Asians have:

"Forgotten how much they were loathed when they first arrived in the UK. There is a collective memory loss in some parts of the elderly populations in terms of forgetting what it was like to arrive with nothing. They have now rejected the very people that they should show solidarity with and instead view the new arrivals with suspicion, and blame them for severe overcrowding, rising crime rates and stretching public services to breaking point".

He goes on to say that there was a time when Caribbean and Asian young people "teamed up" to fight white racists particularly during the days of the Tilbury Trojan Skins (1977 to 1984) whose activities included 'Paki bashing'. This "unity" that appeared in the late seventies during the era of the "jack bootied skinheads", seems to have now been replaced with a desire to attack each other (Howe, 2004).

In his response to the incident that occurred in Birmingham in 2005, ex Minister John Denham noted that:

"Historical Britishness cannot deny the strong strands of racism, exploitation and class division that have been interwoven with the more amenable parts of our history" (Denham 2001).

Part of this history involved strategies of governance that placed different racial groups in a relationship of antagonism with one another. Indeed as John Rex

observed over 30 years ago race relations in the UK still carry echoes of the social and economic circumstances in which the different racial groups first encountered one another and the status and respect accorded to them as a result (Rex, 1970).

The British Empire has throughout history created a middle tier status for different minority groups. Their divide and conquer strategy was used to great effect. The British used the strategy to gain control of the large territory of India by keeping its people divided along lines of religion, language and caste. Other examples include the Asians and Boers in South Africa, the Indians in the Caribbean and the Scots in Northern Ireland (Cohen, 1994).

This colonial strategy magnified differences and sharpened antagonisms between Blacks and Asians (Segal, 1995) and when the British left the hostilities that they had nurtured remained. Many believe that inter racial conflict between Blacks and Asians in Britain today is part of this legacy. Post colonial majority rule meant that those at the bottom of the class and or racial structure emerged as the government," thus endangering the subaltern classes previously installed to control the black majority" (Fisher, 1998).

Following the abolition of slavery in 1833 many companies operating in the 'West Indies' imported indentured labourers from India to fill roles that involved them managing and directing ex-slaves. Historical records show that there were incidents of inter racial conflict as a result of "colonial attempts to divide and conquer people along racial and religious lines" (Prashad, 2001).

The landowners often used Indian workers to undercut the demands of black workers and in some islands the planters and the colonial rulers organised the economy so that blacks lived largely in urban areas and Indians in rural areas (Kale, 1995; Prashad, 2001). As a result of this hostility, hatred developed between the two groups due to an economic struggle for limited resources.

In 2005 Trevor Philips CRE Chairman acknowledged some of this in his response to "Strength in Diversity" (Home Office 2005c) saying that there is growing tension between settled ethnic minority communities that have been British for many years (notably African Caribbeans' and those from the Indian sub-continent).

In Leland Saito's (1998) study of relationships between Asian, Americans, Latinos and Whites in San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles he analyses the connection between 'whiteness' and the constructions of identities among the ethnic minority groups which have now become dominant in the area. His work echoes in some ways the historical relationship between South Asian and African Caribbean's in many parts of the UK. Saito notes that while these groups might come together in solidarity on some issues they can become embroiled in conflict on others which threaten their particular interests. He argues that a key division when these conflicts emerge concerns who is perceived to be whiter. He argues that Asians and the Latinos have become "reluctant ethnics in light of this racial construction and white privilege".



In a similar vein Trevor Phillips observes of the UK that:

"We accept that there are several barriers currently impeding successful integration. Some immigrants do not feel accepted as British, despite their efforts to integrate. It can often feel as if ethnic minorities are travelling on the same bus as everyone else, but are scared of being thrown off because they've not bought a ticket", (2005).

The issue of 'whiteness' takes on another dimension with the arrival of poor white migrants from the EU accession states and white asylum seekers who tend to settle in or near neighbourhoods inhabited by BME citizens.

Phillips (2005) states that, inequality has put members of certain ethnic minority communities at a "chronic economic disadvantage" and goes on to discuss that this has resulted in some communities becoming isolated, cut off from society and feeling little or no obligation to play by what are seen as other people's rules.

In terms of exploring the relationships that occur between those from BME groups it is also important to have an understanding of adolescence development. Issues of self and identity and of masculinity and femininity are essential for this research because it is focused on young people's experiences. From all the literature presented adolescent development will be influenced by young people's social experiences. The research seeks to establish a link between inter racial conflict and identity. This will be different according to gender as the experiences of the two as identified in the readings are very different. How young people behave and react to situations is more often than

not linked to personal experiences. In doing this the analysis of how they then become involved in conflict may be better understood and addressed.

## **2. 2      The development of self and identity in Adolescence**

Young people have to construct and create an identity that is based on gender, sexuality and class. This may also for many young people include a racial or ethnic identity.

Sherif (1982) says, "Identity is the individual's psychological relationship to social category systems; it is a unified, purposeful aspect of self and the self-concept. Tajfel (1978) says that:

"Identity is also the term most often invoked by those who struggle to create meaning and purpose when culturally significant, ideologically powerful social category systems clash with personal and collective group member experiences".

Defining identity is not something straightforward as there are multiple definitions (Herrigel, 1993; Kowert and Jerrey, 1996; Clifford, 1988; Wendt, 1992; Hall, 1989; Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Identity is shaped by a range of variables that include age, class, gender, culture, profession, religion, sexual orientation, language and race. In political theory, which studies the concepts and principles that people use to describe, explain, and evaluate political events and institutions; authors suggest that identity is composed of a combination of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and class (Young, 2003; Connolly, 1991; Taylor and Moriarty, 1987). Gender identity and its role in what it means to be

male or female is discussed in this section in relation to how masculinity and femininity play a role in conflict.

## **Gender Identity**

Gender identity relates to a persons' private sense and personal experience of their own gender in relation to being a man or a woman. Although all societies have a category that defines the difference between male and female not all individuals will identify with some or any of the aspects of gender that are assigned to their genetic category. The distinction between sex and gender distinguishes sex, the biological makeup of an individuals' reproductive anatomy or secondary sex characteristics, from gender; an individuals' lifestyle often culturally learned or a personal identification of one's own gender identity (Prince, 2005) This distinction is not universal as sex and gender are often used interchangeably (Haig, 2004).

Gender is social differentiation based on sex. The term refers to a social and cultural understanding of masculinity and femininity. Gender roles are the social and cultural expectations associated with a persons' sex and are learned during the socialisation process.

Traditionally, gender identity fell into the field of medicine as it was considered to be part of an individuals' psychological sense of being male or female. early researchers like Money (1994) considered gender to be associated with the environment in which a child was brought up and that gender roles could be

assigned and rarely changed after the age of two. Later research by Diamond (1982) disputed this and theorists now accept that biology does influence the gender identity process and attribute more flexibility to people's gender identities (Bem, 1993; Herdt 1990).

Martin (1996) talks of three main approaches to gender socialisation outlining how they are interconnected and overlapping. The three theoretical approaches are individual, interactional, and institutional. On an individual basis gender operates from the inside out but this alone cannot determine how we learn gender. Through our interactions with others around us the individual becomes socialised and this affects gender at an interactional level. The third approach is institutions such as the family, school, and religion which play important roles in the process of gender socialisation.

Gender identity is defined as a personal notion of oneself as male or female (or in some cases both or neither). In most Western societies there exists a "gender binary, a social dichotomy that enforces conformance to the ideals of masculinity and femininity in all aspects of gender and sex - gender identity, gender expression and biological sex" (Carlson et al, 2000).

Martin (1996) states that:

"Gender identity in children generally begins to form at age three or between the ages of four and six. Gender identity is affected by influence of others, social interactions, and a child's own personal interest. Understanding gender can be broken down into four parts: (1) understanding the concept of gender, (2) learning gender role standards and stereotypes, (3) identifying with parents, and (4) forming gender preference".

They go on to say that a three year old can identify themselves as a boy or a girl; though they do not yet know gender is permanent.

Gender identity in nearly all instances is self-identified as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand is manifested within society by observable factors such as behaviour and appearance. As an example, if a person considers him a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male. However his gender role is male only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behaviour, dress and or mannerisms.

Children's gender identity is influenced by social learning theory through observing and imitating gender-linked behaviours and then being rewarded or punished for behaving that way (Myers, 1993). In some cases a person's gender identity may be conflicting with their biological sexual features which results in individuals dressing and or behaving in a way which is perceived by others as being outside cultural gender norms; sometimes referred to as gender variant or transgender (Money, 1994).

Kohlberg (1966) defines gender identity as the "cognitive self-categorization as 'boy' or 'girl'" and presents a three-step acquisition process: he says that:

"First, the child learns to label the self and others accurately (gender identity); second, the child learns that boys become men and girls become women (gender stability); and finally, the child learns that being male or female is permanent and not changed by cultural gender cues (gender constancy)".

Eaton and Von Bargen (1981) suggest an alternative to this. They speak of children's gender understanding including four tasks. These being the correct identification of self and others (labelling); then understanding that identity continues over time (stability); that identity cannot be changed by wishes (motive) and finally recognising identity as being permanent even though things like clothing or hairstyles can be changed (constancy).

In terms of gender constancy Kohlberg (1966) proposes that children use gender to organise their behaviours only when they are "categorically certain of its unchangeability". Huston (1983) however found gender constancy to be remarkably independent of other components of gender-related behaviours. An example being that constancy is unrelated to sex-typed toy choice.

(Leinbach and Fagot (1983) focus on gender labelling rather than on gender constancy. They say that boys and girls who pass their gender labelling test are more likely to play with same-sex peers; girls who use the labels accurately are less aggressive than girls who had not yet mastered the labels. They go on to say that:

"Labelers are more knowledgeable about sex stereo-types; they exhibit more sex-typed behaviour at 27 months; their parents give them more positive and negative feedback to sex-typed toy play; and their parents have more traditional attitudes toward women, sexuality, and family roles" (Fagot and Leinbach 1989).

(Deaux (1992) say that gender is now understood as a social category and gender identity has finally emerged as a construct of interest. Spencer and Dornbusch (1993) defines gender identity as a:

"Fundamental existential sense of one's maleness or femaleness" and a "parative, unarticulated concept of self, initially laid down at an essentially preverbal stage of development and maintained at an un verbalized level".

Gender identity guides the early establishment of a behaviour that matches those from the same gender and is maintained through doing things that are synonymous with others from the same sex. Spencer and Dornbusch (1993) says that these behaviours "hang together with the weakest of glues".

A second definition of gender identity also suggests that the self-system is an essential construct for studying gender psychology (Sherif, 1982). Ashmore (1990) defines gender identity as:

"the structured set of gendered personal identities that results when the individual takes the social construction of gender and the biological 'facts' of sex and incorporates them into an overall self-concept".

Gender identity then includes as identified by Ashmore (1990) personal and social attributes, social relationships, interests and abilities; "symbolic and stylistic behaviours as well as biological, physical and material attributes". Ashmore (1990) talks of an individual's gender identity being separate from his or her sex stereotypes and gender attitudes.

There are three other ideas of gender identity that exist in social psychology. Tajfel and Turner (1986) believe that gender identity is men and women's awareness of and feelings for their "gender category". Other researchers like Abrams et al (1990) have studied how circumstances make gender categories

prominent, increases gender identification and may lead to traditional attitudes and behaviours.

For symbolic interactionists like McCall and Simmons (1978) gender identity refers to peoples' self-conceptions that are based on the particular gender roles they play. For social constructionists gender identity is created from structured social constraints. Leidner (1991) in his research demonstrated how distinct gender identities are created in two interactive service jobs that require the exact same skills but have different training emphases. Ely (1990) in his research showed how the number of "allowable" gender identities for junior women in law firms varies with the number of senior female partners present.

In some cases a person's gender identity may be incompatible with their biological sex characteristics; resulting in individuals dressing and or behaving in a way which is perceived by others as being outside cultural gender norms. These gender expressions may be described as gender variant or transgender.

### **Masculinity and Femininity**

When people think about gender they often think about a continuum with masculinity on one extreme and femininity on the other. Masculinity is a set of characteristics that are associated with maleness while femininity is a set of characteristics that are associated with femaleness. Gender roles primarily indicate how a person is supposed to dress, act, think and feel based on whether they are a man or woman. While masculinity and femininity are on



opposite ends of a scale most people find themselves somewhere in the middle, depending on certain traits that are attributed to either males or females. This is the masculinity-femininity continuum.

The masculine ideal is 'taught' at an early age whereby boys are told not to cry and to maintain a stiff upper lip. They are geared toward traditional masculine toys like cars and trucks, sport type games or action figures but not dolls.

Chafetz (1974) comments that among the characteristics that may be considered more masculine are: defending an opinion or belief, being a provider, sexually aggressive, unemotional, logical, rational, intellectual, stoic, adventurous, competitive, playing team sports, being a leader, being forceful, self-sufficient, being an organizer, and being independent. Chafetz (1974) also identified seven areas of traditional masculinity these being; physical, functional, sexual, emotional, intellectual and interpersonal. The characteristics listed previously fall into one of these areas.

Characteristics considered more on the feminine end of the scale include: caring for children and others, being empathetic, being indecisive, affectionate, not following through on tasks and not speaking up when being challenged (Snell, 1989).

Society's categories for what is masculine and feminine appear to be unrealistic as they may not capture how we truly feel, how we behave or how we define ourselves. Much research states that all men have some so-called feminine traits and all women have some so called masculine traits and that we may show different traits at different times. Women and men are culturally expected

to be the opposite of each other in many ways although in effect we are more often than not alike rather than different.

Men and women are often ascribed gender stereotypes which are widely accepted judgments or preconceptions credited to each gender role. Traditionally although not implicit to all societies there are four basic kinds of gender stereotypes. These being:-

- Personality traits — Women are often expected to be passive and submissive while men are usually expected to be self-confident and aggressive.
- Domestic behaviours — Caring is often considered best done by women while household repairs are often considered best done by men.
- Occupations — Until very recently most nurses and secretaries were usually women and most doctors and construction workers were usually men.
- Physical appearance — Women are expected to be small and graceful while men are expected to be tall and broad-shouldered.

The issues associated with masculinity are important to this thesis as much of it is related to young men. Masculinity varies and transforms over time and as such is constantly being created and recreated through changes in family and culture but also institutions as in place of work and in politics. These changes have both social and psychological impacts as it interacts with other individual differences such as social class, occupation, race, sexual orientation and

religion. Masculinity may mean something different to an upper class white male than to a lower class minority male.

In gender studies, hegemonic masculinity is the gender practice that guarantees the dominant social position of men and the subordinate social position of women (Connell, 2005). Theoretically, hegemonic masculinity explains how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other gender identities which are perceived as "feminine" in a given society. As a sociologic concept, "hegemonic masculinity" analyses the power relations among the social classes of a society.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools (Kessler et al, 1982) in a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and the experience of men's bodies (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the model of practice that allowed mens' dominance over women to continue. It was distinguished from other masculinities especially subordinated masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity represented a cultural form of manhood that was socially and hierarchically exclusive and concerned with bread-winning; that was "anxiety-provoking and differentiated (internally and hierarchically); that was brutal and violent, pseudo-natural and tough, psychologically contradictory and thus crisis-prone; economically rich and socially sustained" (Donaldson, 1993).

Sociologists criticised that definition of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character-type which is logically limited, because it excludes the complexity of different and competing forms of masculinity; which was then subsequently changed to include "gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the processes of social embodiment and the psycho-social dynamics of the varieties of masculinity" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006).

Research undertaken by Harland (2000) discusses the pressure that men feel to act masculine. If they appear weak, emotional or sexually inefficient this can be a "major threat to their self-esteem". Stress may develop if a man feels that he has acted 'unmanly' especially amongst peers which can then often result in increased "social validation or a competitive advantage". In a study of masculinity four mechanisms were found to result in emotional stress. They include:

- the emphasis on prevailing in situations requiring fitness and strength
- being perceived as emotional and thereby effeminate
- the need to feel conquering in regard to sexual matters and work
- the need to repress tender emotions such as showing emotions restricted according to traditional masculine customs

A Children Now (1999) study found that mainstream media representations play a role in reinforcing ideas about what it means to be a 'real' man in our society. In most media portrayals male characters are rewarded for, self-control and the control of others; aggression and violence; financial independence and physical desirability. Men are often seen working or playing hard or involved in a

situation of risk or adventure. Male characters are often represented as isolated and not needing to rely on others – as in the lone hero. This can be a lot to live up to. It also highlighted that gender expectations for boys are much more severe than for girls. This means that boys are more severely criticised for violating gender norms than girls and in most cases it is acceptable for women to be like men but unacceptable for men to be like women.

In modern society some traditional gender roles have changed primarily due to the changing nature of the world of work and the expectations that women have in relation to supporting families with childcare. With these changing roles conflict and crisis may arise. Diane Abbott the current shadow health minister has spoken about support for boys and men saying that there is a "crisis of masculinity in Britain because of the pressures rapid economic and social changes have placed on masculine identity" (2013). She went on to say that this has left men feeling "isolated and misdirected" and open to "common psychological disorders including depression and anxiety".

Professor Geoff Dench, a social anthropologist argued this, saying that the "advent of feminism has led to a situation where women are able to do everything for themselves, leaving men feeling less valued with a diminished economic role" and that "All human beings have an altruistic tendency and value being able to help other people; for many men this is only possible through families and working for families" (2013).

Whilst young people are developing a sense of gender and what this means to them they are also creating identities associated with how they are seen by others.

## **Social and Personal Identity**

Social identity theorists suggest two general classes of identity which define different types of self (Brewer, 1991; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Turner, et al, 1987; Hogg and Abrams, 1988;, Deaux 1992;) these being:-

- 1 personal identity (construed by idiosyncratic personal relationships and traits) and
- 2 social identity (defined in terms of group membership)

Personal identity refers to the essence of a self-conscious person; that which makes him or her uniquely what they are.

Social identity formation includes the development of national and ethnic identities. Fearon (1991) summarises various definitions of social identity by describing it as:

"a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristics and attributes" and a "socially distinguishing feature that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or a mixture of the two)".

## **Personal Identity**

Erickson (1968) believed that life could be viewed as a series of stages from birth to death. His approach took its inspiration from psychoanalytic theories of development beginning with the work of Sigmund Freud who believed that early childhood experiences had a lasting effect on the course of development. Erikson (1968) developed eight stages in this process suggesting that at stage 5 (Identity versus Confusion) young people going through adolescence are engaged in 'the search for identity'. During this period he believes young people

need to discover who they are as individuals separate from their family and members of the wider society.

As part of the process of striving to establish an identity the change process which will include a period of "questioning and exploration" will take place before an identity is achieved. During this stage Erikson (1968) argues that some people will experience 'identity crises. He says that:

"During adolescence, children are exploring their independence and developing a sense of self and that those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and a feeling of independence and control. Those who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will be insecure and confused about themselves and the future".

He goes on to say that if an identity is pushed onto the adolescent by parents/school/peers) he or she may not adequately explore alternative roles which may result in identity confusion. As a result they may withdraw and isolate themselves which can lead to an incomplete identity formation whereby they are susceptible to assuming a role that is expected or forced upon them.

Researcher James Marcia (1966, 1976, and 1980) expanded on Erikson's (1968) initial theory. He believed that the balance between identity and confusion lies in making a 'commitment' to an identity. He also developed an interview method to measure identity as well as four different identity statuses. These being:-

- **Identity achievement** occurs when an individual has gone through an exploration of different identities and made a commitment to one.
- **Moratorium** is the status of a person who is actively involved in exploring different identities, but has not made a commitment.

- **Foreclosure** status is when a person has made a commitment without attempting identity exploration.
- **Identity diffusion** occurs when there is neither an identity crisis nor commitment.

The development phases of adolescence are crucial as the experience encountered during this time whether positive or negative can have an affect on how young people view themselves. Bee (1992) says that:

“the most basic part of the self-scheme or self-concept is the sense of being separate and distinct from others and the awareness of the constancy of the self”.

Self-concept or self identity refers to how individuals view themselves and differs from being self conscious which is about being aware of their existence. Rosenberg (1979) defined the self-concept as “the sum total of our thoughts, feelings and imaginations as to who we are”. In sociology self and identity begins with the hypothesis that there is a mutual relationship between the self and society and that each has an influence on the other (Stryker, 1980).

Burke and Stetts (1980) argue that self concept includes not only our own view of who we are but the view that this can be “changed and revised” based on the situations we find ourselves in and as such we then develop views about ourselves based on what others may share with us. This act of reflection fits well with the “looking glass self” concept (Cooley, 1902) which says that self grows out of society's “interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others”.

Tajfel (1978) looks at identity as a social membership which emerges from the context of relationships between various groups. An individual defines oneself by making a (presumably) favourable distinction between ‘us’ (the group he or



she belongs to) and 'them' and through this self-identification acquires a positive social identity.

## **Social Identity**

There are three main components of the looking-glass self (Yeung, et al. 2003).

- We imagine how we must appear to others.
- We imagine the judgment of that appearance.
- We develop our self through the judgments of others

Lewis (1990) suggests that development of a concept of self has two aspects.

The first is that a child realises that they exist as a separate entity from others and that they continue to exist over time and the second that once they realise that they exist they realise that they are an object in the world. In comparison Carl Rogers (1959) argues that self concept has three components these being, the view one has of oneself (Self image); the value one places on oneself (Self worth) and what one wishes one were really like (Ideal self). The outcome of this is that for many young people peer groups become more important and the role of family becomes less influential because generally during adolescence young people tend to spend more time with their peers and have less adult supervision. Young people's conversations also tend to shift during this time whereby they prefer to talk about school and their careers with their parents and they enjoy talking about sex and other interpersonal relationships with their peers (Steinberg, 2010). Young people will look to join peer groups who accept them even if the group is involved in negative activities. Young people are less likely to accept those who are different from them (Tarrant, 2002).

One component of self concept is self esteem. Franks & Marolla (1976) identified two dimensions of self esteem; these being "inner self esteem" (being effective) and "outer self esteem" (acceptance by others). Gecas and Schwalbe (1983) labelled self esteem as being efficacy based self esteem (seeing oneself as competent and capable) and worth based self esteem (feeling that one is accepted and valued).

Research into self-esteem (Baumeister, 1998) identifies a range of characteristics typical of high and low levels of self-worth. High self-esteem is defined by such features as resilience, emotional stability, positive reactions to life, stable and consistent self-concept and an absence of conflict when searching for and obtaining approval and success. In comparison people with low self-esteem tend to be vulnerable to the impact of everyday events, have wide mood swings, are easily persuaded or influenced, crave success and approval but are sceptical of it and have inconsistent or unstable self-concept.

Cast et al (1999) argue that self-esteem is closely tied to the identity "verification" process and that this not only enhances feelings of self-worth but also feelings of control over ones' environment. As such Owens and Aronson (2000) have linked self-esteem with efficacy by arguing that by perceiving oneself as competent there will be more participation in social activities to try to achieve social change. This awareness of self reflects the many different positions that one can hold in relation to where they sit in society or in different social groups. They believe that the issue of identity "is organised into multiple parts (identities) where each is tied to aspects of the social structure". Stryker

(2000) says that "Each person has an identity; an internalized positional designation for all of the different positions or role relationships they hold in society". In other work Stryer (2000) discusses identity as having a "cultural or collective view in which the concept represents the ideas, belief and practices of a group or collective". He also comments that a second view of identity is that it is embedded in "social group or category" and finally a third view that has grown out of 'symbolic interactionist tradition', especially its 'structural variant' takes into account "individual role relationships and identity variability, motivation and differentiation".

McCall and Simmons (1978) define identity as "the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position" and that this will be influenced by experiences in a personal, group or social context. Stets and Burke (1995) says that personal identities may influence role and group identities and vice versa. Establishing an identity is therefore a complex process and occurs differently for each individual dependent on their personal and social experiences. Identity is:

"an internalized, self-selected concept based on experiences inside the family and outside of the family; we form our identity by selecting values, beliefs, and concepts that better define our sense of self" (Adams et al,1992).

Personal and Social identity although stable and definable are strongly interrelated and one cannot be analysed or understood except in terms of the other (Deux, 1992).

Whilst the development of identity is a complex experience for all young people the identification with their own culture is an important aspect of identity

development for young people from ethnic minority groups (Phinney and Alipuria, 1990).

## **Ethnic and Cultural Identity**

BME young people have membership both in an ethnic group and in the dominant culture. Ethnic identity can be defined as "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behaviour that is due to ethnic group membership" (Phinney and Rotheran eds, 1987). Santrock (2004) says that identity is a:

"self-portrait composed of many pieces, which will include religious, political, relationship and ethnic identity and young people have to go through a series of stages in order to gain this positive identity".

Other studies mention identity as a factor in nationalism and ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 1985, Smith, 2011), and multiple analyses of state sovereignty are grounded in "state identity" (Wendt, 1992 and 1999; Katzenstein 1996, Bierstecker and Weber 1996). Deng's (1995) definition of identity is one that is well placed in terms of this research. He says:

"The way groups and individuals define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture".

Ethnic identity is separate from an individual's personal identity although the two may reciprocally influence each other. Four major components of ethnic identity have been identified by Phinney (1996), these being:-

- Ethnic awareness (understanding of one's own and other groups)
- Ethnic self-identification (label used for one's own group)
- Ethnic attitudes (feelings about own and other groups)
- Ethnic behaviours (behaviour patterns specific to an ethnic group)

In the case of second generation children the process of identity formation works differently than for their parents. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) write about this process of cultural identification saying:

“Relative to the first generation, the process of ethnic self-identification of second generation children is more complex and often entails the juggling of competing allegiances and attachments. Situated within two cultural worlds, they must define themselves in relation to multiple reference groups (sometimes in two countries and in two languages) and to the classifications into which they are placed by their native peers, schools, the ethnic community, and the larger society”.

Many young people become caught between their parents' ethnic beliefs and values and those of the country they are living in. This can create additional conflict during the period that they are securing their own self-identity. Young people may assume different roles to help them fit into competing parts of their lives and for many they do this very well. For others this is a difficult process particularly if they have not yet found their own self identity. Rosenthal & Feldman (1992) have said that:

“In order for the culturally different adolescent to achieve a stable self identity, he or she must integrate the racial or ethnic identities with a personal identity”.

There has been extensive research on ethnic identity and self-esteem with a number of different approaches supporting a positive relationship between the two. Taifel and Turner (1986) suggest strong links between group identification and self perception. Young people will strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity which in turn will boost their self esteem. Positive identities will more often than not be achieved from making comparisons with in groups and out groups. Brown (1984) says that people will seek to leave their groups in

order to achieve a more "positive distinctiveness". Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) says that:

"Immigrants in a new country are often viewed in negative or derogatory ways by the larger society and may take a variety of positions in the face of devaluation of their group".

Phinney and Rotheram (1987) have been leaders in establishing the development of ethnic identity. They have put forward a model that has three stages that young people encounter in establishing their ethnic identity; the unexamined, the searchers and the achievers. The first stage which relates primarily to adolescents and some adults occurs when either the individual prefers to identify with the majority culture or has no interest in or independent opinions about ethnicity. In the second stage which is very similar to Marcia's (1980) moratorium status there is a period of "immersion in the ethnic culture" often triggered by a specific experience forced upon the individual. This leads to the third during which ethnic identity is understood and embraced by the individual. Phinney says that:

"Stage 3 does not necessarily require intense involvement in the traditional culture, however, nor does this stage necessarily mark the end of the individual's exploration or self-identification process" (1992)

Whilst Phinney presents this model as one that is progressive it may be that young people do not necessarily go through these stages in a methodical way and that they may go from stage 1 to stage 3 or might go directly to stage 3 or get stuck in stage 2.

This model has been used as the basis for many other researchers in trying to establish a model for how young people form their ethnic identity. Other researchers particularly Berry (1990) have stated that the staged model is too simplistic for those trying to establish their ethnic identity. He believes that young people will take one of two positions. One of these is the retention of their cultural traditions and the other focussed around establishing and maintaining relationships within society. Berry states that if you consider these two dimensions there could be four possible positions that an individual could take. These are:-

- Integration – High retention of cultural traditions but develops and maintains relationships with the mainstream culture
- Assimilation – High maintenance with relationships in the majority culture and low level retention of their own cultural traditions
- Separation – high cultural retention but low level identification with the mainstream culture
- Marginalisation – low on both own cultural traditional AND mainstream culture

Phinney (1996) acknowledged this model as being a more useful one and developed it as part of her research into identity formation of ethnic minorities. In doing this she offered another set of positions where young people could either reflect or accept one over the other or find a compromise between the two.

### **2.3 The role of identity in inter racial conflict for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people**

If we are to understand how conflict may manifest itself amongst BME young people we need to understand how personal and social situations can be

influential. In this section three areas of conflict are discussed that can affect young people from BME communities. First the conflicts that may arise from family interactions and situations; secondly those that came from identity theft associated with the taking of signs and symbols that may be associated with belonging to a specific culture and finally conflict that arises out of increase in immigrant groups in already highly populated and resource poor neighbourhoods.

### **Family and Conflict**

Young people from BME backgrounds face multifaceted issues in adapting to their culture of origin and to the culture of a new country. The issue of ethnic identity is particularly important for adolescents whose parents are immigrants who are likely to retain their language, values, and customs from their country of origin throughout their lives.

A number of studies have considered the influence of family on ethnic identity and these show that those in minority ethnic families are shaped in the same way as those mainstream cultures (Spencer and Dornbusch 1993). The attitudes of parents have a significant effect on young people and often there is conflict between parents and children about the level of interaction they should have with the mainstream society.

The differences between the two cultures present young people with many choices to make particularly in areas such as cultural practices, language and friendship. Whilst many of these influences will be intrinsic even within same cultural groups where people share similar origins and traditions, ethnic identity will be formed in relation to a number of dimensions which are influenced



directly and indirectly by their experiences of the social world. These can be influenced by family and friends or externally through personal experience. In addition identity is influenced by inherent factors which can be social, political or economic as well as internal experiences related to how they are treated or externally as in how the media and others showcase their particular cultural group.

As stated previously ethnic identity is developed from experience and influence and much of this can be positive. However:

"stereotypes that society places on ethnic groups can be a great contribution to the adolescents' sense of pride or shame about their own ethnicity, and can be a great source for adolescents' ethnic identity conflicts" (Maldonado, 1975).

Over the last two decades social and behavioural scientists have "increasingly emphasised the role of self and identity in the causes and consequences of inter group hostility and harm doing" (Jussim et al, 2001). They believe that this occurs because the issues associated with self and identity occur at multiple levels and as such individuals' experiences within a social context as a group within a society and as a nation of the world are of significance in the formation of identity. Maaloof (2000) sums this up as saying:

"Each one of us has two heritages, a "vertical" one that comes to us from our ancestors, and a "horizontal" one transmitted to us by our contemporaries and by the age we live in. It seems to me that the latter is the more influential of the two, and that it becomes more so every day. Yet this fact is not reflected in our perception of ourselves, and the inheritance we invoke most frequently is the vertical one".

Jones (1997) says that "at the level of an individual within a social context ethnic identity may contribute to both in group bonds and hostility towards other groups". In terms of self and identity at group level:

"social identity theory and self categorisation theory emphasise the potential for group based identities to foster support for the status quo among higher power and status groups, and to foster inter group competition and movements for political change amongst lower power and status groups" (Jussim et al, 2001)

BME young people not only have to work through their own adolescent developmental phases but they also have to explore cultural, political, economic and social issues (many of which are littered with racial hostility) associated with the country they are living in along with the cultural expectations of their own ethnic group in order to determine their identity. Willis (2002) argues that young Black people cannot simply base their identities on the experiences of earlier generations; which in BME communities are often fundamentally different.

It is not surprising then that many young people "may experience culturally based internal conflicts and that they may sometimes feel as though they are 'caught between two cultures' in certain situations" (Dugsin, 2001). As such many young people may find that negotiating their way through these two cultures may result in conflict.

### **Cultural Borrowing and Conflict**

A number of young people view the emulation of those things that are associated with them like the clothes that they wear, the music that they listen to and the way that they speak as part of this erosion. This may be particularly

important for this group especially when the formation of elements of their identities is derived in part from media images.

Cultural borrowing occurs when these cultural practices are performed by those who would not be considered to be part of that culture. In this situation many South Asian young men have adopted the styles 'traditionally' associated with Black young men. This leads many of these Black young men to question the meaning of this emulation and as we have noted above far from finding it flattering see it as an unwarranted incursion into their socio cultural space. This serves as a source of conflict because they come to believe that a culture that has been created as part of their identity is being stolen from them. As a result of this they may have to re-form their identity and re-establish who they are Thomas (1986) says:

"as a possible defence against identity diffusion, adolescents may become overly ardent in their identification with super-heroes, cliques, and causes – each of which can be the focus of personal devotion".

To counteract this young people need to be confident about who they are and as such liking and feeling good about yourself develops self esteem. Psychologists speak of three specific areas which play a part in the development of self esteem. These are self-image, self-concept and self-identity. Self-image has been defined as the "total subjective perception of oneself, including an image of one's body and impressions of one's personality, capabilities and so on" (Coon, 1994). In comparison other psychologists talk of self image being an individual's physical appearance and the integration of ones' experiences,

desires and feelings. Self-concept has been defined as "ones' self-identity; a schema, consisting of an organised collection of beliefs and feelings about oneself" (Baron et al, 2003), as one's sense of 'me' (Myers, 1993) and as "a cognitive appraisal of our physical, social and academic competence" (Eggen, 1999).

Self identity is understood as a complex multidimensional concept with several components and has been defined as "Who am I? - An integrated image of oneself as a unique person which often includes ethnic identity" (Bernstein et al, 1994) and "What one is; which distinguishes one from what is known and believed, what one holds dear and reveres and what meaning one's existence has" (Carson et al, 1992).

The identity that many BME young people develop will be profoundly influenced by their relationships with white young people and the core task is to negotiate what it is to be a 'Black' young person in a predominantly 'white culture'. The challenge in doing this for many Black young people is that White culture has been greatly influenced by a number of things; one of these being music. Hip Hop Music primarily has drawn many white young people towards elements of black youth culture. Hip hop music developed as a local underground alternative to the mainstream with a message which confronted urban poverty, racism and a growing sense of economic abandonment in Black inner city neighbourhoods (Rose 1994). Hip-hop has in the present lost its original meaning much in the way that jazz, blues, gospel and other types of historically black music have lost theirs throughout the years; from being heavily commercialised and expanded

in order to encompass a much wider fan-base. "While hip-hop is no longer solely the voice of the black community as it once was, it has grown, becoming the voice of a variety of communities and peoples, as well as products and companies" (Hurt, 2006). Even so many Black young people will consider this in its simplicity as something that is being taken away from them.

TRBI the marketing agency which advises clients on how to sell products to young people conducted a series of interviews with black and white teenagers to produce its report: 'Black Britain and Its Influence' (2004). In the report they state that "the days when popular culture was controlled by white artists and pushed by cultural organisations have faded. Black youth have a disproportionate influence on mainstream culture". TRBI reported that one of the main reasons white youth seems to follow black culture is due to the "absence of any credible alternative sub-culture. Whereas previous white generations had acid house or punk today's teens have to look to black culture for their inspiration".

One of the reasons for cultural borrowing is simply because black is cool. "In the music industry in particular, the predominance of African American R&B and hip-hop artists attest to their popularity and to a 'black cool' trend" (Elam 2005). The impact of this is that in some areas one set of young people may have become empowered at the expense of another and in terms of the three concepts: self image, self concept and self identity they are not only complex in their own right but bring about multifaceted dilemmas when compounded with each other. Bailey (2003:1) offers an interesting example of how these three

concepts interact with each other and may be pertinent to this research. Talking of the 'street people' who live in the black ghettos of the America, he says:

"For them, 'respect' is at the heart of their 'street code', (a term coined by Anderson 2003). So meaningful is 'disrespect' that the 'baddest dudes on the street' are willing to risk death over the principle of 'respect'. Respect represents the top value within their philosophy of life. Built around a respect oriented philosophy of life is their character. One of the 'bad' character traits they use to gain 'respect' is the taking of other's possessions. The more expensive jackets, sneakers, and gold jewelry they acquire by whatever means, the higher their self-image. Reinforcement 'props' for their self-image and self-identity are 'the look', 'the walk' and 'the talk'.

He goes on to say that:

"These three 'personality' pieces, as well as their bad character traits, the dishonorable acquiring of things of value, and the displaying of '*manhood*' by exerting violent or abusive power over others are all parts of their work products. The degree to which they are successful is directly proportional to the degree of their value based self-esteem".

Paul Gilroy argues:

"We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept theoretically and as a contested fact of contemporary political life. The word itself has acquired a huge contemporary resonance inside and outside the academic world" (1997).

Cultural borrowing can also be a coping mechanism for some. Kim (2006) says that in American society Asian males are characterized as "subservient, effeminate, and sexually undesirable. Their pacifism is often mistaken to be a weakness and they are considered to be pushovers; too introverted and quiet to fight back". He goes on to say that Black males in contrast are seen to be "strong, dominant, athletic and physically larger in size; and through popular

culture – especially music and film – this set of characteristics has been reinforced as the desired qualities in a man”.

By downplaying the negative Asian traits and adopting certain black traits Asian men can fit better into mainstream American society. Sometimes black men are also negatively characterised as dangerous and violent; but even this would be considered as a better alternative to being weak. Asian males are essentially using one set of stereotypes to mask another.

Identity formation is a complex and difficult process and more so in an increasingly diverse and uncertain social and cultural world and this may encourage young people to develop an unrealistic sense of their own socio-cultural separateness which as Young (2003) has argued can mean:

“In a late modern world where people increasingly create their own sense of identity and culture, multiculturalism encourages ... (young people) ... to go to your roots and find your ‘true’ self. Such a fixed essence is then contrasted with ‘Others’ (Catholics against Protestants, Islam against non-Islam, White against Black) and allows prejudice to be based on notions of fixed differences. A multiculturalism that seeks tolerance paradoxically creates the conditions for prejudice and intolerance”.

In the present Young (2003) argues:

“It is the second generation immigrants who have become more assimilated to the values of the wider society who most acutely feel relative deprivation, the discontent of which frequently leads to higher crime rates”.

He goes on to say that:

“the prevalence of criminality in minority neighborhoods is not a product of any racial essence but of subcultures which have adapted to the new country and which transmute rather than replicate the

original culture of origin [...] Over and over again the determinants of class are confused with the propensities of 'race' or ethnicity".

This legacy that exists allows antagonism to continue and affect any notion of shared membership and as such young people are threatened by those from other cultural groups, when they believe that their identity is at stake and it is being taken away from them. This concept of identity theft challenges young people and they then make claims that these other young people are: "trying to be like us" and "talking and acting like us". For these young people whose identities are already fragile this apparent emulation through acculturation is not seen as a compliment but as a threat. (Taifel 1978: Bailey, 2009:2).

It is this absence of a sense of a shared class predicament and a shared legacy of struggle which allows the internecine struggles between these minorities to fester and continue to grow.

### **Social Space and Conflict**

Bollens (1996) talks of ethnic and cultural diversity enriching city life but says that:

"the issue of diversity and difference can evolve into a situation of division, anxiety, fear and violence; therefore can paralyse and impoverish that enrichment process".

Boal (2001) says that "cities, by definition, are about conflict and contested space" and describes a 'Scenario Approach' that identifies various degrees of classification of urban separation. He says that there are many forms of



division along with changing intensities, and that it is important to identify or classify these "snapshots or scenarios" that may occur at a certain point in time.

He identified five scenarios that:

"may occur with the outcome of the mixing of people with different political, physical or religious ideological attributes. In turn the contested nature of an urban space may display characteristics of some of these scenarios, as it may change over time and across the urban space" (2001).

He identifies cleansing as a scenario in which he says that in a contested city a "distinctive group has been driven out or 'chosen' to exit, producing a homogeneous ethnic grouping of the dominant enforcers". In his polarisation scenario he implies "a severance of the physical or social urban space which may involve an unresolved ethno-national conflict within which governance takes place without consensus". This in turn he suggests can cause major conflict over space and can raise concerns over "equality and questions of whether it is in the urban public's best interest". He also discusses how:

"polarisation is a circumstance within which a strong minority may reject urban and societal institution, making consensus regarding political power-sharing impossible".

This scenario highlights the possible exacerbation of public opinion or social tensions within a contested urban space by the use of control of an ethnic group. BME identity cannot then be disengaged from questions of power, structured inequalities and history since as Madood et al (1997) argues they are rooted in "collective experiences of migration, diasporas and racism". As a consequence there is both large, national and small local politics at play for many BME young people and sometimes this small politics take a violent form. Nationality, race and ethnicity are not natural categories or predetermined identities; they are political constructs with shifting memberships and meanings.

They are ways of naming oneself and others and of representing identities and interests within different orders of collectively (Pearson, 2001).

Modood et al, 1994 (page) observe:

“Identities are not closely tied to single issues or symbols; people hold multiple identifications, some more strongly than others, and they use these flexibly according to circumstance. In this context these identifications are also expressions of cultural hybridity, where a variety of historical, international, ideological and political factors influence expressions of self-hood, belonging and relationships with others. People have created cultural spaces through which they express a variety of different and competing identity claims”.

As newly arrived minority groups enter ‘their’ geographical and social space the contest for who gains and who loses results in increased conflict. Many young people from these communities believe that they have to fight back to retain what they believe is theirs. In this struggle fragile identities are put to the test and re-asserting ‘who I am’ becomes an integral part of retaining control. (Modood et al, 1997).

The young people from more established BME groups express discontent about the fact that new arrivals being housed in their areas are taking over their parks, their community centres, youth clubs and their schools. They claim that the newcomers are “taking all our housing” that “we can’t get jobs because of them” and that “they smell” and are “trying to take over”. These comments made during the data gathering but heard previously in general conversations in youth clubs and youth centres are based on a perceived threat; a fear that they are losing what they believe to be those places and spaces which define

where they are and as such whom they are. What is at risk here is more than just social space; it is their hard won identity which appears to be at risk.

These concepts of 'invasion' and 'conflict' are documented in work carried out by the Chicago School 80 years ago (Thomas, 1986). In this work the researchers argue that the development and organisation of the city is a product of the social processes of invasion, conflict, accommodation and assimilation.

Ethnic Minority young people have concerns about the arrival of these newcomers. It seems that they can co-exist with the newer ethnic minority groups until the more established groups think that the newcomers are emulating them in terms of dress, music and language. In this sense they have a fear of identity theft as a perceived attempt to appropriate the signs and symbols of a hard won and very fragile identity. This fear is exacerbated but not generated by the belief that local resources are being directed at the newcomers at their expense. This sense of threat can be a spring board for on the one hand issues around 'identity theft' and on the other about attack of their space. This invasion of the areas that they deem sacred becomes a source of conflict for many young people. They see that what little they have is constantly being eroded away.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Identity appears to be central to the violent confrontations that occur between young people from different racial groups. To address this we need to

understand the centrality of identity formation and the peculiar struggles confronting BME young people in terms of trying to discover the source of these. Thus it can be argued that inter racial conflict and the violence that emerges from this is part of a process where young people primarily boys and young men engage in inter group conflict as a way of securing, retaining or attempting to reclaim their identity.

## Chapter 3.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 3.1. Formulating Questions

Punch (2001) tells us that good research questions are:-

Clear	They can be understood, and are unambiguous
Specific	Their concepts are at a specific enough level to connect to data indicators
Answerable	We can see what data are required to answer them, and how the data will be obtained
Interconnected	They are related to each other in some meaningful way, rather than being unconnected
Relevant	They are interesting and worthwhile questions for the investment of the research effort

Punch (2001) emphasises the importance of getting the questions right as “bad questions do not satisfy one or more of these criteria”. In addition he tells us that a possible effect of asking faulty questions can be that we incorporate value judgments within them. As Williams & May (1996) state:

“In philosophy it is often said that facts correspond to ‘is’ statements, whereas values correspond to ‘ought’ statements. In other words, to state fact is to describe the way something is. Ought statements ascribe to something, or prescribe how someone should act”.

A value judgment can be defined as an expression that contains either disapproval or approval (Emmet and Jordan 1996) and can be concerned with what we would like our experiences to be (Fineman and Gabriel 1996). This leads to an understanding that value judgments are inevitable but that we should be clear about what they are. Lincoln and Guba say:

“we should be prepared to admit that values play a significant part in inquiry, to do our best in each case to expose and explicate them...and, finally to take them into account to whatever extent we can” (1985).

The choice of research area and the problems and questions within that area undoubtedly involve value judgments and as Addelson (1991) states, "whether something is a social problem or not depends on ones own social position and ones perspective and it is often also a political question". Punch (2001) adds that having acknowledged the role played by their own values the researcher should aim to carry out the research in a value free way. This becomes particularly important when "the findings are discussed and interpreted and their implications for action and practice are drawn out".

### **3.2. Emerging Questions for the Research**

The Literature review undertaken established that there some were historical issues linked to inter racial conflict that had been experienced, primarily African Caribbean, prior to settlement in the UK. It was able to highlight the historical issues that exist for first generation families coming to live in thee town and it is evident that these are where the majority of the conflicts are instigated and evolve.

The literature review also outlines the complexities of being a young person in terms of adolescent development and identity formation particularly in relation to culture and ethnicity and how this can create issues of conflict with others especially those from other cultural groups. In addition the literature review highlighted the challenges of appreciating people from other cultures when you are forced to engage with them by default rather than choice. The struggles that happen in social spaces create animosity that creates conflicts based on

personal experiences, misinformation and socially constructed models of working.

Punch (2001) says that research questions are “central, whether they are prescribed or whether they unfold during the project” because they do five main things which are to:

“Organise the project giving it direction and coherence; delimit the project, showing its boundaries; keep the researcher focussed; provide a framework for writing up the project and point to the data that will be needed”.

I have argued that identity formation may play a key role in inter-racial conflict amongst disadvantaged BME adolescents and this suggests there are four key research questions. It is through operationalising these questions in my methodology, that answers may be found to establish how and why this conflict emerges and how it might be resolved or ameliorated. These questions are:-

1. What are historical origins of inter racial conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young people in Luton and how is this conflict sustained in the present?.

This will involve the collection of data on the experiences and beliefs of the older generation (the culture carriers) in each ethnic community and assessing whether and to what extent these experiences and beliefs are a contributory factor to the violence. The literature review suggested that historical enmities between these two cultural groups might be a precipitating factor in the conflict that is played out on the streets.

2. What is the relationship between the young people's perceptions of the origins and nature of the conflict in each ethnic group and actual historical events in Luton?.

This will involve the collection of data on the experiences and beliefs of the younger generation in each ethnic community and assessing whether and to what extent these experiences and beliefs are a contributory factor to the violence.

3. To what extent is the conflict territorial i.e. a struggle for ownership and control of geographical space and resources?

This will involve the collection of data on the experiences and beliefs of the older generation and the young people in each ethnic community and assessing whether and to what extent these beliefs are a contributory factor to the violence. This will be supported with data from reports and meeting notes from local authority and police meetings over a number of years to make comparison.

4. To what extent and in what ways can issues of identity be understood as contributory to conflict'?

This will involve the collection of data from professionals, the members of the community and the young people. In analysing this data types of conflict can be determined and whether the perceived threat of what I have called 'identity theft' for BME young people from another BME group serves to consolidate that identity and fuel violent conflicts between the two groups.



A semi structured questionnaire was constructed and then administered with professionals and practitioners. The interview schedule contained open ended questions thereby allowing scope for respondents to tell their own stories in their own ways. The young people were subjected to an ethnographic study and supported with a few focus groups which were conducted during the research period. The research was focussed on qualitative information; achieved through these methods that also allowed for richer data to be gathered and the ability to triangulate the information.

In the next chapter the reasons for my choice of these methods are discussed in greater depth.

## **Chapter 4.**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Having identified four key research questions this chapter discusses the research methods employed and the ethical considerations thrown up by the fieldwork undertaken in completion of the thesis.

In research there is method and methodology. Method relates to the tools of data collection or the techniques as in questionnaires or interviews. Methodology is focused on the philosophical meaning and refers to the approach or model that underpins the research. This includes as example positivism, interpretivism, critical or postmodern. These paradigms form different ways in which we understand social reality and the nature of knowledge. We all have theories about how the world works, what the nature of humankind is and what it is possible to know and not know.

The roots of Positivism lie particularly with empiricism which works only with observable facts. It's basic principle is that all factual knowledge is based on the 'positive' information gained from observable experience and that any ideas beyond this realm of demonstrable fact are 'metaphysical'. Only analytic statements are allowed to be known as true through reason alone. It takes a view that social science should mirror as near as possible, procedures of natural sciences. The research should be objective and detached from the 'objects' of the research.

Interpretivism is often linked to the thought of Max Weber (1958) who suggests that in the human sciences we are concerned with *Verstehen*

(understanding) in comparison to *Erklaren* (explaining). The interpretivist approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world. Interpretivist views have different origins in different disciplines. Cicourel, (1964),; Garfinkel (1967); (phenomenology/sociology), the "Chicago School of Sociology" (sociology) and Boas and Malinowski (1922); (anthropology) are often connected with the origin the interpretivist paradigm.

Critical inquiry research does not set about only to have an understanding but it is research that challenges and takes a view. This is usually about a situation that needs to be challenged and changed. In this model research around feminism, Marxism and anti-racist work would be included. Postmodernism was originally a reaction to modernism often referred to a cultural, intellectual or artistic movement or 'mood' – contemporary sensibility which has developed since World War II (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

These methodologies as with others contribute to the philosophical concepts of ontology and epistemology. Ontology referring to what exists in the world and the nature of reality and epistemology as to what counts as knowledge.

#### **4.1. Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology**

Guba (1990) argues that ontology and epistemology and hence methodology are inseparable because of the "reciprocity between how 'an individual human's

sense of what existence is' is constructed, and the model of existence on which that construction is based". This means that our understanding of 'What is existence?' our ontology and 'What is knowledge?' our epistemology are interdependent. Thus as Krauss (2005) observes:

Epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology; as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it.

Epistemologies are theories of knowledge that address questions such as who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes and validates knowledge and what the relationship is or should be between knowing and being; that is between epistemology and ontology (Stanley and Wise, 1990). One's assumptions about the nature of social reality and what constitutes valid knowledge about it will therefore shape one's methodology; determining how questions are constructed and how data is collected. However ontology assumptions are frequently contested and so the claim to know must be justified on the basis of how the claim comes to be made (Crotty, 1998).

Silverman (2001) when talking about 'Realism' implies that social structure like gravity; while 'real' in the sense that it appears to shape social relations is not available to the sense perceptions of the subject because it is a 'second order' construct which has been manufactured by scholars and inferred from what they believe to be the observable socio-cultural 'effects' of social structure. It is a concept situated in an argument about ourselves and the situations in which we find ourselves. Meanwhile 'Idealism' places the notion of social reality in

parentheses. This means that for 'Idealists' accounts of social reality yielded by interview data for example can be regarded as neither biased nor accurate but simply 'real' for the research subject.

Realism and Idealism deriving as they do from two quite different epistemologies represent competing paradigms where "a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts and propositions orientates thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklan, 1982). Likewise a paradigm can be defined as the "basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) characterise the two major paradigms in which contemporary social science is undertaken thus:

Positivism which:-

- Follows a model derived from (experimental) physical science
- Seeks to identify universal laws and regular relationships
- Studies phenomena that are directly observable
- Uses neutral observation language
- Tests theories (especially through the control of variables)
- Seeks to eliminate the effects of the observer / researcher
- Is mainly associated with quantitative research

Naturalism which:-

- Follows an alternative scientific model, from biological science
- Seeks to understand cultural meaning

- Studies the social world by drawing on the researcher's skills as a social actor
- Describes in great detail
- Involves a researcher who attempts to maintain objectivity and make the familiar strange
- Is mainly associated with qualitative research

Ellen (1984) has described Methodology as "an articulated and theoretically informed approach to the production of data". Atkinson and Heritage (1984) somewhat polarised distinctions notwithstanding the methodology chosen by a researcher; will be determined both by the paradigm within which they are working and the phenomena they are endeavouring to research and this may involve a good deal of pragmatism (Cavaye, 1996). As Falconer and Mackay (1999) note:

"different phenomena may require the use of different methodologies and by focusing on the phenomenon to be investigated rather than the methodology the researchers can select the appropriate methodologies".

#### **4.2. Research Strategy**

Having considered the various positions that might be adopted the research has been aligned to naturalism. This type of inquiry is research that focuses on how people behave when absorbed in genuine life experiences in natural settings. Naturalistic research aims to develop context specific statements about the multiple, constructed realities of all the key participants. A number of assumptions are made about this type of research; these being that it should be

studied in context, that the subject be examined without any preconceived notions or expectations and to accept that even though the researcher may try to see the issues from the point of view of the subjects in question the researcher will still have their own view. This interpretive approach provides a deep insight into "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994). This is based on the fact that the research questions are asking about meaning to the participants interviewed and about issues related to personal identity.

Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) state that:

"Interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and inter subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive researchers thus attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them".

A second definition given by Walsham (1993) says:

"Interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and that this applies equally to researchers. Thus there is no objective reality which can be discovered by researchers and replicated by others, in contrast to the assumptions of positivist science".

Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran, 2001). It also assumes "that our knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artifacts" (Klein and Myers, 1991).

Different research problems require different research approaches (Singleton and Straits, 1999). Two main categories of research approaches are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods are those which focus on numbers and frequencies rather than on meaning and experience. Quantitative methods (e.g. experiments, questionnaires and psychometric tests) provide information which is easy to analyse statistically and fairly reliable. Quantitative methods are associated with the scientific and experimental approach and are criticised for not providing an in depth description.

Qualitative methods are ways of collecting data which are concerned with describing meaning rather than with drawing statistical inferences. What qualitative methods (e.g. case studies and interviews) lose on reliability they gain in terms of validity as they provide more in depth and rich description.

Quantitative methods have come under considerable criticism particularly in modern research where most psychologists tend to adopt a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This allows statistically reliable information obtained from numerical measurement to be backed up by and enriched by information about the research participants' explanations.

Research methods can be classified into research strategies; these being experimental research, survey research, field research and action research (Singleton and Straits, 1999).



Experimental research designs are founded on the assumption that the world works according to causal laws. These laws are essentially linear, though complicated and interactive. The goal of experimental research is to establish these cause-and-effect laws by isolating causal variables. This approach requires that a situation can be created by the researcher so that they can repeatedly carry out the experiment on various subjects.

Survey research on the other hand is used when attempting to identify the incidence of certain characteristics amongst groups or populations which allows a researcher to relate various characteristics to explain a phenomenon. Survey research is an important area of measurement in applied social research as it allows the broad area of survey research to encompass any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents. The survey is a non-experimental, descriptive research method and can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed such as people's opinions. In a survey researchers sample a population and as Basha and Harter (1980) state "a population is any set of persons or objects that possess at least one common characteristic".

In terms of field research the researcher can immerse themselves into a situation that is occurring naturally with the aim of gaining firsthand knowledge of that situation. Field research is an excellent method for understanding the role of social context in shaping people's lives and experiences and it enables a greater understanding of the intricacies and complexities of daily life. Field research may also uncover elements of people's experiences or of group

interactions of which we were not previously aware which is in particular a unique strength of field research. Because a field researcher's focus is so detailed it is by necessity also somewhat narrow therefore field researchers are not able to gather data from as many individuals as say a survey researcher can reach. Indeed field researchers generally sacrifice breadth in exchange for depth. Related to this point is the fact that field research is extremely time intensive and the challenge in this situation is to determine what information needs to be required and that the opportunities are available for this to take place.

Action research (Kock et al, 1997) is often identified by its dual goal of improving the organisation participating in the research and at the same time carefully generating valid and consistent knowledge. The action research practitioner is expected to apply positive intervention to this environment and observe the changes in the environment and the researcher themselves. Action research is an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organisational change (Reason & Rowan, 2001).

Action research allows for an open approach similar to field research which enables information to be captured that cannot often be predetermined. It is also conducive to the researcher being able to actively participate in some form of change which can be triggered by the researcher and then the outcome of

that change examined. In this instance both the researcher and those being researched can learn and benefit from the change that occurs.

In consideration of the research strategies action research was chosen for this thesis first and foremost because of its ability to deal with multifaceted systems and its capacity to allow intervention to promote change. Even though this method has both supporters and critics (Kock et al 1997) some researchers feel that real research results can only be achieved through quantitative data methods as this method looks at the general case and moves toward the specific. This deductive approach to research considers a potential cause of something and hopes to verify its effect. On the other hand those that support action research methods argue that some research is too complex to be broken down into measurable variables. One of the ways to address this is through the use of mixed methods and often researchers will combine a quantitative research method like a survey with a qualitative research methods like an indepth interview which will enable them to produce a combination of statistical and experiential data. Other researchers may combine different types of quantitative and qualitative methods in one study however irrespective of what research methods are combined together it is important to explore and acknowledge the paradigms and perspectives in which different methods are often located. The potential advantage of using mixed methods is that it can provide the benefits of different methods while compensating for some of their limitations.

Action research is a practical way of looking at your own work and to check that it is how you would like it to be. Because action research is done in the main by practitioner; often referred to as practitioner based research, it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work. On this basis this research constitutes the concept of an action based piece of research as it is very much practitioner based and there is constant reflection and evaluation.

Faced with a variety of options for carrying out this research the advantages and disadvantages of a range of models were considered. To determine the possible options that could be utilised consideration was given to both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. These were assessed thoroughly in order to meet the aims and objectives of this particular research. The aim of my research is to understand the meanings ascribed to inter-racial youth violence by the protagonists, adult members of their communities and the professionals involved with this conflict and the implication of these meanings for action. As such a qualitative methodology approach was utilised; which appeared to give greatest access to the subjective understandings of the research subjects and hence to these meanings.

Marshall et al (1998) say that qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information these being: "participation in the field, direct observation, in depth interviews and case study analysis of documents and materials". Qualitative researchers use a range of different approaches and as such have drawn on models like grounded theory, storytelling and ethnography

or action research. Additionally quantitative research may inform or be drawn upon in the process of qualitative research.

This type of research does not produce the quantifiable data elicited by opinion polls or file and case studies even though this type of research may include questions about subject's perceptions and assumptions. My chosen methodology is more closely associated with forms of social investigation currently described as grounded theory because it attempts to gather rich data and to build a theoretical understanding on the basis of that data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that the aim of grounded theory is 'to generate or discover a theory'. Denzin (1989) notes this data:

"evokes emotionality and self-feelings; it inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard".

This methodology is useful in uncovering basic social processes and in terms of my own research ideal for exploring integral social relationships and the behaviour of groups where there has been little exploration of the contextual factors that affect individual's lives. They go on to say "to get through and beyond conjecture and preconception to the underlying processes of what is going on so that professionals can intervene with confidence to help resolve the participants main concerns".

Some of the disadvantages of this model lie in the subjectivity of the data which can lead to difficulties in establishing reliability and validity of approaches and information. It can also be difficult to detect or to prevent researcher-induced

bias and the highly qualitative nature of the results can make them difficult to present in a manner that is usable by practitioners.

My own research is informed by a particular reading of post-colonial history; a particular understanding of social structure and class and race relations in the UK discussed in the literature review in chapter 2. As such I bring to this data a variety of theoretical assumptions which Karl Popper described as 'conjectures'. Popper (1963) derived the term 'critical rationalism' to describe his own philosophy of science saying that the theory of science and human knowledge is hypothetical. He said that a theory could be considered only to be scientific if it was falsifiable. In fact he said that the essence of a proper scientific theory if it is not open to being false can then be considered only as a myth or pseudo science.

In the data analysis as well as building a picture of the life world of the research subjects I have been at pains in the manner of Popper (1963) to seek out evidence to falsify or refute them. This analysis has inevitably involved interpretation and in reality even the most avid aficionado of grounded theory cannot avoid the task of interpretation and of saying what the meanings gathered from their rich data actually mean.

#### **4.3. Rationale for Choice of Methods**

This thesis ultimately is about gaining insight and meaning about the lived experiences of the young people. In addition the research attempts to

interrogate the perceptions of professionals working with BME young people involved in inter racial conflict and to chart the points of convergence and divergence.

The key components of any qualitative methods of research are primarily based on an interest in the meaning and the perspectives and understanding of a specific topic. This is combined with a focus on what takes places in a natural setting and as such the researcher places emphasis on the process. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) defined qualitative research as "primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories." This definition implies that data and meaning emerge "organically" from the research context.

Qualitative research as a strategy is predicated on "underlying assumptions and perspectives" (Wiersma, 1995). He summarized these in the following ways:-

1. Phenomena are viewed in their entirety or holistically, meaning that it is not possible to reduce complex occurrences into a few mutually dependent or independent factors.
2. Investigators research in "nature" meaning that researchers do not impose their assumptions, limitations and delimitations of their research designs upon emerging data. He emphasised that the researcher's role was to record what he or she observes and to collect data from the 'subjects' in their natural environment.
3. "Reality" exists as the subjects see it meaning that the researcher's role is to record fully and accurately without bias the reality that is seen through the eyes of subjects.

4. Post hoc conclusions emerge from the data meaning that assumptions about the conclusion are not made and should be avoided.

From the range of research methods available the first phase of the research was focussed on interviews with Chief Officers, Senior Management, Professionals and Practitioners, along with Community members, a number of whom are identified locally as community leaders. The second stage was an ethnographic study with young people over a period of 18 months which would be supplemented with focus group interviews where relevant. Initially a list was compiled of those who would be asked to complete the semi structured questionnaire. These would go to:-

- Chief Officers in the police, the local authority and other relevant services.
- Service Heads again throughout the local authority, police and voluntary sector.
- Practitioners working across the statutory sector engaged in youth focused work.
- Youth and Community Workers from both the statutory and voluntary sector who had direct involvement with young people.
- Community Members who could be assumed to be leaders from relevant communities, these would include the Imams and church leaders.

The ethnographic study which would capture the stories of the young people would be derived from participant observation and two focus groups carried out over the 18 month period. This was undertaken in two local youth clubs where a large percentage of those young people involved in or participants to some of the conflicts are attendees.



Using the methods chosen allowed me to generate data that could be triangulated in order to assess the veracity of the accounts of the events under discussion as Denscombe (1998) notes:

"In some senses, research methods ...can be seen to be competing with each other...Yet, in another way, they can come to compliment each other. They can be combined to produce differing but mutually supporting ways of collecting data".

Irrespective of the research methods researchers are in an influential position in their ability to say what does and what does not constitute knowledge. Johnson & Duberley (2003) warn researchers against the tendency:

"To make unexamined metatheoretical commitments, and remain unaware of their origins, amounts to an abdication of intellectual responsibility which results in poor research practices.'.

In addressing this the researcher must be able to evidence the reliability and validity of the methods chosen.

#### **4.4. Reliability and Validity**

In an analysis of the information gathered the researcher needs to have an awareness of the accuracy of the information being gathered and whether the conclusions drawn can be applied to everyone or only to those that have been part of the study. The researcher also needs to consider whether if repeated the research would come to the same conclusions and in order to establish this the researcher must consider aspects of reliability and validity.

The use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research and whilst the concept has been used for testing or as central to research then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. A good qualitative

study can help us “understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing” (Eisner, 1991). Patton (1990) says that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study.

The research choices for this thesis are qualitative and as such the researcher needs to consider these in relation to the methods employed.

### **Reliability**

Joppe (2000) defines reliability as:

“The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

There are two aspects to reliability; consistency - being stable (over time) and the other internal consistency. Basically this means that if the same person was asked the same question twice would the same information be given each time. This is referred to as test and re-tests reliability and requires two administrations of the measuring instrument. The other concept internal reliability requires only one administration of the method and aims to determine which tests or procedures assess the same characteristics, skill or quality. It is a measure of the precision between the observers or of the measuring instruments used in a study. This type of reliability often helps researchers interpret data and predict the value of scores and the limits of the relationship among variables. Clont (1992) and Seale (1999) endorse the concept of

dependability with the concept of consistency or reliability in qualitative research. This consistency of data will be achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 1996); thereby ensuring that trustworthiness is crucial when seeking reliability in qualitative research examination (Seale, 1999).

Lincoln and Guba (1994) say that "Since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]". Patton (1990) with regards to the researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research also states that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study.

## **Validity**

The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. This concept is not a:

"single, fixed or universal concept, but rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects" (Winter, 2000:1).

Joppe (2000) provides the following explanation of what validity is in quantitative research:

"Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others".

The data that is gathered is useful for analysis if it actually measures what it claims to be measuring. In terms of validity then the data needs to give a true measure of what is really happening; that the facts and the logic behind them appear to be reasonable. The researcher wants to make statements about the world and make what are 'knowledge claims'. He or she wants these claims to be valid meaning they are well-grounded in logic and fact so that we can trust in them because valid claims are solid claims. "Any research can be affected by different kinds of factors which while extraneous to the concerns of the research, can invalidate the findings" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Controlling all possible factors, which can be internal or external, that threaten the research validity is a primary responsibility of every good researcher.

Internal validity can be affected by flaws within the research itself such as the design or the data collection. Seliger & Shohamy say:

"Findings can be said to be internally invalid because they may have been affected by factors other than those thought to have caused them, or because the interpretation of the data by the researcher is not clearly supportable" 1989).

In terms of external validity this is about the generalisation that can be applied to a larger group of people or within a different context. The research could possibly lack external validity if it is for example focussed on people of one gender, one age group or from one particular ethnic grouping. Seliger & Shohamy (1989) say that "Findings can be said to be externally invalid because they cannot be extended or applied to contexts outside those in which the research took place"

Reliability and validity go hand in hand and as such data that can be considered reliable but not valid may have only a limited use as it may be focussed only a specific group of people. In comparison data that is valid but not reliable means that it is accurate for a specific group of people but could not be applied to the general population. In light of this researchers need to apply concepts of validity and reliability to all data that is used for analysis.

In reflecting on the methods used in this thesis critics could argue that the results in this study came about due to a set of unusual people in a particular circumstance or that it only works in certain places or at certain times. It is probably worth acknowledging that research cannot always claim representativeness but given that the research questions in this thesis derived from existing research outlined in the literature review it is felt the findings will be relevant to any consideration of inter racial youth conflict in other settings.

#### **4.5 Reflexivity**

Researchers must be self-aware which “involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes’ (Hardy, 2001). Reflexivity is about engaging in a critical appraisal of one’s own practice methods and undertaking an investigation into how such approaches lead us to particular kinds of solutions and theories and not others. It is applied to all research methods and not just particular kinds of epistemological approaches as they should all be transparent in their origins and impacts. Various frameworks for considering reflexivity have been offered

by different researchers. Johnson & Duberley (2003) equate different kinds of reflexivity with different kinds of metatheoretical commitments. They say that it is important to:

“become more consciously reflexive by thinking about our own thinking, by noticing and criticizing our own epistemological pre-understandings and their effects on research, and by exploring possible alternative commitments”.

As a researcher we need to reflect on the practice undertaken to identify what role we played in producing certain kinds of knowledge, how and why we came to the conclusions we did and how the resulting knowledge functions to shape the world. “To make unexamined metatheoretical commitments and remain unaware of their origins amounts to an abdication of intellectual responsibility which results in poor research practices” (Johnson & Duberley, 2003); reflexivity therefore enables us to focus on this.

Hardy (2001) say that “Reflexivity involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes” whilst Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000) say it is about “the interpretation of interpretation”, and Woolgar and Lynch (1988) “the ethnographer of the text”. Holland (1999) talks about 4 different “levels” saying that “important function of reflexive analysis is to expose the underlying assumptions on which arguments and stances are built”.

In reflecting on the research process the researcher might ask a number of questions ranging from why an interest in this particular research and the questions asked through to who were asked and whose voices were allowed to

be heard. As such there needs to be reflexivity around the method in terms of how the research should be designed or conducted in order to provide a convincing account, to determine what alternative interpretations may exist and why; what may have been dismissed along with the role that the researcher plays in producing the results as well as why specific choices have been made and the reasons for these.

Finlay (2002) suggests that to avoid self-indulgence we should be constantly linking our personal experience of the research to theories and grounding it in the data. Lewis and Grimes (1999) suggest we might achieve different perspectives on research by viewing the problem from different epistemological positions. They see this as a "practical outcome that enables participatory research in that participants are also involved in determining the research agenda and new interests and objectives currently excluded are pursued". Therefore reflexivity is always a pursuit and never a destination.

The methods of research adopted were selected on the basis that each was the most efficacious in targeting a specific target group and gaining the information required to situate the issue and the provide answers to develop practice. There was also a consciousness that the methods used and the role of the researcher were also adopted because of the relationship that the researcher had with those that information was being gathered from. Nightingale and Cromby say:

"Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then,

urges us "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (1999).

Carla Willig (2001) tells us that "There are two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity". The first of these is related to the reflection that we undertake in relation to how our "own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research". The second of these is about how the research "may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers". In this instance we are prompted to consider how the questions were constructed and could they have been done differently. She refers to this as "Epistemological reflexivity" which she says, "encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings".

In addressing issues of reflexivity the research promoted me to consider a number of things in terms of my relationship with those taking part in the research and the possible outcomes of the answers given to questions. Reflecting on my role with a number of those involved in the research made me aware of the how I might influence. I have numerous roles in the community and as such these could influence some of the information provided to me by respondents. My role as a local councillor is probably the one that is of most concern as a number of the officers I am seeking information from work for the council. Although they will have worked with me as an equal in other arenas in this relationship the balance of power is shifted. Officers may make



assumptions about the values and judgements that I will place on their answers or how I view them on what they say. They may then make a conscious decision to provide me with scant information or detailed information on what they think I want to know. Within the community I have worked alongside numerous statutory, voluntary and community sector providers. My local councillor role here is significant in that the community members could be thinking that the more information they give me, the more likely I am to do something about it so they do not relate to me as a researcher but as someone who will deal with the issues that are or have been flagged up.

I am conscious however that the purpose of the research is to find reasons behind the conflicts that arise and as a practitioner consider strategies for tackling these which can be presented as part of a holistic approach to addressing the issues.

#### **4.6. Research Methods Chosen**

The researcher sought to undertake a piece of qualitative research using a range of data collection procedures. These are Interviews, an Ethnographical study through Participant Observation, Focus Groups and some Document Analysis (Meeting Minutes, Newspaper Reports). The analysis for these methods follows.

### **Semi Structured Questionnaire**

A semi structured questionnaire was designed to gain information related to the main information that the researcher wanted to gather but included a number of other questions that would hopefully give an insight into the scale of the conflict that existed in the town and how it might be remedied. The focus of the questionnaires was primarily to gain an 'adult' view of the issue in question. The adults chosen crossed a range of professions and status; these being from Chief Officers to Community Leaders and Youth and Community Workers.

These were chosen because they were linked directly or indirectly to the work of the youth offending service because they were in a position of accountability (chief officers), had responsibility for strategic planning, (service heads) responsibility for delivery (practitioners) or experience of dealing with the issues (youth workers and community members). The questionnaire was sent out to:-

- 3 Chief Officers, (CO)
- 9 Service Heads, (SH)
- 11 Practitioners (P)
- 10 Youth Workers (YW)
- 17 Community Members (CM)

They were asked to fill in the questions outlined but given free range to add as little or as much to the question being asked as they wanted to. As discussed previously I was conscious of my relationship with many of these people in that they knew me quite well in a professional capacity. The covering letter was important in terms of addressing this along with the email sent out with the attached questionnaire in clarifying the purpose of the research. Respondents were made aware that their contributions in terms of the semi structured questionnaire gave them the opportunity to offer as much information as they

wanted to. They were also informed that this information was supplementary to the research focus; this being an ethnographic study with young people.

This method took out the time element that would be required for individual interviews but gained information that could be used to substantiate or refute other data. This method of data gathering was used primarily to gain information that could be used in enabling triangulation with the accounts given by young people.

Triangulation in social sciences is used as a means of checking the results; often referred to as 'cross examination'. By using two or three methods to answer a question it allows the researcher not to rely on a sole method but to show where similar information is produced from differing methods. Triangulation is considered important in this research as it substantiates where the thinking on the issues have similar perspectives whilst coming from varying sources but also establishes where possible unsubstantiated or unsupported information is presented that needs to be investigated further.

Cohen and Manion (1986) define triangulation as an "attempt to map out or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint". Altrichter et al. (2008) contend that triangulation "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation".

Questionnaires can be considered to be "a set of questions for respondents to complete themselves" (Newell, 1993). By providing open ended questions those being requested to provide information could write as little or as much as

they wanted. The questionnaire was also based on 10 specific questions as at this level it was unlikely that a huge response would be received if the questionnaire was lengthy and time consuming. The questionnaire was sent by e mail and responses were received through this communication method. Since many of those being targeted accessed their communication from a range of places this was considered to be a supportive method.

In relation to the semi structured questionnaires the researcher considered the relevance of face to face interviews versus submitting the questionnaires and having the respondents fill them in autonomously. Doing a one to one interview with a potential candidate has many advantages. Firstly the candidate or interviewee might feel comfortable in one on one interviews and speak more openly and give more information in terms of open-ended questions. A one to one interview may provide a relaxing less formal environment for the respondent so they may feel less self-conscious. The researcher has the opportunity to obtain detailed information about the respondents' feelings, perceptions and opinions along with asking more detailed questions and clarifying ambiguities whilst pressing on for full answers or following up on incomplete answers. The researcher may also use precise wording and tailor it to each respondent and clarify certain questions as requested by each candidate. Questions can also be delved into deeper gaining richer data for analysis.

Information in a one to one interview is detailed and systematic. The researcher has the opportunity to observe the respondents facial expressions and body

language which in turn will give the researcher a clearer indication of the respondents clear and honest feelings.

The negatives associated with this model are that one to one interviews can be intrusive and reactive; they are costly and time consuming and meeting cancellations and re-scheduling may increase and extend the research period. Other issues are that questions may not be answered methodically and information is delivered erratically so there may be a risk to give advice during the interview. The researcher may unknowingly manipulate possible responses and respondents might feel uneasy about the anonymity of their responses which could result in questions about the validity of the research.

In deciding on the way forward the choice of interviewing face to face and guiding the respondents through the process was eliminated primarily because the researcher did have some rapport with the respondents; this could lead to them giving the researcher the answers they believed may be expected of them.

Submitting a semi structured questionnaire was chosen to access information from those working in the field after weighing up the positive and negative attributes of this method. From the point of what was hoping to be achieved the benefits to this method for the researcher was based on:-

- Cost effectiveness - it was more cost effective than undertaking face to face interviews
- Quick – although they can take a long time to analyse.
- Familiarity - Nearly everyone has had some experience completing questionnaires and would be able to do this autonomously.

- Productive – enables the respondent to complete the questionnaire in their own time and within a busy work schedule.
- Objectivity – reduces bias, eliminates the face to face interview where the researchers may influence the respondent to answer in a certain manner.
- Can easily be repeated – checking for validity and reliability

With these observations in mind the questionnaire was designed to have ten questions with the intent to elicit data without prompting specific answers. The questions asked were focussed on gathering specific information that could be matched against the information gathered from the voices of the young people. The questions were drawn up in relation to the thesis hypothesis, the findings in the literature and the desire to seek some solutions to addressing the issues that arose. At the time of writing them and carrying out the research they appeared to be satisfactory in gaining the information required. At the time of writing up the findings the questions were reflected on again and the relevance of all the questions were deemed to be substandard based primarily on a couple of the questions not being relevant; a leading question where the researcher could be criticised in terms of bias and links to government policies that not all respondents would have been aware of.

In addition they were designed to access information that would be vital for the research and from the researcher's point of view gather information swiftly which would form an integral part in triangulating information. The questionnaire was piloted with 5 professionals working with young people. The purpose of this was to determine how long it would take to fill in the

questionnaire and the clarity of the questions before circulating to a wider cohort.

The final version of the questionnaire went out to 50 people who had been identified for the research as previously stated. The initial assumption of the researcher was that if at least half of the questionnaires were returned completed this would be considered satisfactory in having information that could be compared against the 50 young people the ethnographic study was seeking to talk to.

This information from the semi structured questionnaires would then be added to the wealth of information that would be gathered from the young people through the ethnographic study. The people chosen were done so as there was an expectation that they would participate in light of the fact that the focus of the research was linked to areas of responsibility they held or to concerns that had risen in the community in their respective roles. In addition it was a live issue that they were dealing with at the time of the research which they were looking to develop strategic and practice responses to. It was assumed that they would have specific information that could be contributed to the data and as such the researcher targeted some individuals who were actively involved in the work.

## **Ethnography**

This method formed the bulk of the data for the research and was undertaken with the young people over a period of 18 months.

In the ethnographic study with the young people the two youth centres chosen for this study had already been identified through the youth workers as the most relevant places to reach those who were involved in, party to or observers in the conflict that had taken place over the last few years. Having this information was useful as a starting place for carrying out the study with young people. It was however supplemented with the views of young people not linked to the two centres identified.

The ethnographic study was based on participant observation where the researcher is party to the conversations and can interact with the young people. In this sense, the researcher was able to assist in the youth centre and take part in the activities unlike a non participant observer who would be unable to subscribe to this type of ethnographical study. It has long been acknowledged that when studying non-mainstream groups in society such as "the marginalised and the stigmatised, researchers must tailor their data collection methods to both the sensitivity of the research topic and the vulnerability of research subjects" (Renzetti and Lee, 1990). Because observational research does not intervene in the activities of the people being studied (Alder & Alder, 2000) ethnography is in particular, suitable to investigating sensitive issues because such work can provide rich detailed descriptions about the unknown or the little known.

Ethnography is a qualitative descriptive method in which the researcher attempts to study the behaviour and customs of a group of people by becoming



an intricate part of the study. This model was developed originally by anthropologists like Malinowski (1922) who spoke of being able “to grasp the native’s point of view, *his* relation to life, to realise *his* vision of his world”. Developed later by Whyte (1981) it enables the researcher to understand the group better or “to see the things as those involved see things” (Denscombe 1998).

Ethnography involves the study of people in their natural setting which ultimately means that the researcher is present for large periods of time collecting data on what they are seeing and hearing. Noaks and Wincup (2004) refer to ethnography as a research strategy that is inextricably linked to two forms of data collection – participant observation and in-depth interviews. In the research for this thesis both these models were prominent and as such this statement sits well for this piece of work.

In criminology ethnography has been used as a credible method of undertaking research (Brewer, 1999, Noaks and Wincup, 2004) albeit that there are critics who say that ethnography as a research method lacks academic rigour. This is based on the fact that it is subjectivism and arbitrariness. I think ethnography can give you access to the ways in which particular groups of people understand the world – whether or not this is an accurate perception is another question – but this is what I wanted to find out so I believe that it is valid.

Ethnography has been used in a range of research that focuses on understanding the lives of children and young people and as such the

researcher believed it to be a good quality method for enabling the voices of the young people in the study to be heard. James (2001) has argued that ethnographic research has “enabled children to be recognised as people who can be studied in their own right within the social sciences” and has gone as far as to claim that ethnography is the “new orthodoxy in childhood research”. She says that this method of research allows young people to be recognised as having the competencies required to analyse their own world and make contributions to developing practice. Ethnography has been used by other researchers to explore the lives of children and young people, one pertinent to this piece of work is that done by Connolly (1998) which looked at gendered and ethnic identities in childhood.

With this in mind the method was chosen to use within the youth club and activity sessions that were already in place where many of the young people significant to this research spend time. Being party to the conversations on the current issues that this research was seeking to explore they would be a rich resource to gathering information, checking out assumptions and determining what relevance this had in developing practical solutions to preventing and reducing inter racial conflict amongst young people.

In undertaking the ethnographic study each of the youth clubs was visited on a weekly basis. Each of the youth club’s membership had received an initial meeting and an introduction to the researcher, some of whom the young people knew. The purpose of the study was explained and ground rules were established prior to the weekly attendance of the researcher. These took place

over an 18 month period commencing from January 2008 to June 2009. This enabled an intensive amount of work to be done during the summer. The research period also spanned a period that commenced from the aftermath of some local incidents between the two groups highlighted previously; these being the high profile community tensions related to a range of specific incidents which evolved into a number of community meetings aimed at resolving the issues and determine some strategic responses. It also spanned the development of a Commission on Cohesion to update the previous report that had looked at cohesion in Luton and elicit the views of residents across the town on what was good about Luton's diversity and what the challenges were.

### **Focus Groups**

This method was identified as a possible means of exploring data gathered during the ethnographic study. These were to be established primarily to discuss data that had been collated, to gain clarification on issues that arose and enrich existing data. I also wanted to discover how the issues that arose might link to identity and ultimately any relation that this had to inter racial conflict. As a researcher I was conscious that I had set the agenda for these focus groups and needed to not only manage them but be conscious at all times that I was using the primary data gathered in the ethnographic study for more intensive conversations. By using the same young people I had already been working with over a long period I made assumptions that they would be comfortable with me and have these debates.

I also wanted to draw out from the study the role of young women. I wanted to hear the views of young women because although they were rarely involved in the conflicts they were often observers but also involved in relationships with many of the young men. Although I initially made an assumption that they had something to offer it emerged they were instrumental in providing information across a number of areas that helped to gain clarification on particular opinions that the young people held.

Merton and Kendall's (1946) significant article on focused interviews set the parameters for focus group development. They identified the need for participants to have a specific experience or opinion about the topic under investigation; that a script is used to guide the interview and that focus is maintained on the research questions.

My intention was to use a very loose set of questions to enable the discussion to take place so that it would be organised and interactive. This fits well with the purpose of focus groups which have been defined in a variety of ways. They have been referred to as organised discussions (Kitzinger, 1994) collective activity (Powell and Singel, 1996) social events (Goss and Leinbach, 1996) and interaction (Kitzinger 1994). All however have made reference to the contribution that focus groups make to social research.

Powell and Singel (1996) define a focus group as:

"a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research".

Morgan makes reference to an unclear distinction by the researcher between interviewing a group and undertaking a focus group. He says:

"Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants.....focus groups however rely on interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher" (1997).

He goes on to say that the key characteristic which distinguishes focus groups is the "insight and data produced by the interaction between participants".

Focus groups allow a large amount of data to be gathered in a short space of time and as such allow the researcher to gain an insight into people's shared understandings of a particular topic or issue. It enables the researcher to gain a range of perspectives about the same topic. In carrying out focus groups the researcher needs to take into consideration aspects of this model where the role of the moderator is very significant and they need to be able to lead the group, have strong interpersonal skills and manage the group successfully.

I also reflected on my own role in these group discussions where some but not all of the young people know me through my work as a community youth worker. They may or may not have been involved in one of our organisations projects. There is a difference in age and for most of the young people gender however I am conscious that whilst these can be barriers they may also be assets.

One of the disadvantages of focus groups is that they are not necessarily natural groups. In the research the focus groups brought together individuals who had been identified through the ethnographic study as those who could contribute to a wider debate and provide more intrinsic information. Three

focus groups were undertaken as part of the research. These were advertised in the youth clubs asking young people to contribute to an in depth discussion.

The young people had already been used to the researcher attending the youth club and were fully aware of the topic being studied. The young people were given some information on the focus of the group discussion and the youth clubs all provided pizza on the nights that these were held. Of the three focus groups held; one of these was attended by seven young men all of whom were from the South Asian community; the second was attended by six young men from the African Caribbean community and the final a mixed group of eleven young people that also included four young women.

The focus groups were managed by the researcher and permission was granted to record the sessions. They were set up for an hour each and ground rules established. This method was chosen as the researcher believed that it would allow time for the information to be clarified, be focussed, gain different perspectives and decrease the chances of the discussion digressing. One of the focus groups ran to an hour and 15 minutes as there was an interesting debate about the role of young women that needed to be captured.

### **Documentary Analysis**

As outlined previously the ability to access information from some other sources presented itself during the period of research. Emerging issues related to the community tensions between the two racial groups being studied initiated a

number of community meetings. The researcher had access to the minutes of all the meetings held over this period. By reading through the minutes and subsequent newspaper reports additional information could be secured.

Documentary analysis is an important research method in its own right but can also be a valuable tool in terms of triangulation. Documents may come from a range of sources which includes public records, the media, private papers, visual documents or biography. In this instance it comes from minutes of meetings and newspaper reports.

The advantages of using this as a qualitative research method for this particular research, is that it allowed the researcher to gain an insight into the communities' concerns and issues. It assisted in probing trends, patterns and reliability in what was being identified in other parts of the research. This type of research method can also "Provide a preliminary study for an interview, survey, or observation. Interview questions, survey questions, or an observation checklist can be informed by a document analysis" (Chism, 1999).

Challenges associated with this method are that the documents or materials may be incomplete or missing and the data is limited to what already exists and that it does not add anything new to the research.

In undertaking the documentary analysis the first thing that was considered was what the aim of this collection method was seeking to establish. The researcher was clear that this was not about gathering additional information but

utilising the material to support claims made by the respondents, otherwise this would have been very time consuming.

Focussing on the four questions that the thesis was seeking to answer each document was mapped against these. The researcher picked out from each relevant information that could be used to triangulate the information being gathered from other sources. These were highlighted in four colours each matching one of the questions so they could be referred to when writing up.

Although this took some time it proved in the long run to be beneficial as some of the minutes captured historical issues very succinctly and they were much clearer in a number of instances than the way they were depicted by some of the respondents. In bringing this element into the study it helped to support or bring clarity to some of the claims being made by those taking part in the research.

#### **4.7. Ethical Considerations**

Ethical research practice is underpinned by the principle that "research is not just a matter of collecting information but is concerned with the dignity, rights, safety and well being of those taking part in the research" (Stuart et al, 2000).

Additionally the ethical guidelines that are utilised in this research are advocated by the Social Research Association (SRA), which states that:

"if social research is to remain the benefit of society and the groups and individuals within it, then social researchers must conduct their work responsibly, they have a responsibility to maintain high



scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and analysis of data and impartial assessment and dissemination of findings” (2003).

As the researcher I need to be conscious that there may already be some prejudice at the outset of the work. In reflecting on my role I am clear about my desire to give young people a licence to voice their opinions and in some way use this information to inform practitioners on how they might develop their practice. This already creates an environment where the standpoint of the researcher is one of bias as I have identified that this work needs to be done and have already made commitments to certain outcomes. This thesis does not attempt to influence readers as the researcher had made it reasonably clear that the position taken is about presenting a current area of conflict that exists between young people from two specific cultural backgrounds and then attempting to substantiate why there is a belief that the fluid changes associated with identity is key to the way this emerges and remains fundamental to young people. Indeed Becker (1963) says “Criminologists have long had to deal with the question of deciding which ‘side they are on”. Patton (1990) tells us that:

“The human element of qualitative inquiry is both its strength and weakness – its strength is fully using human insight and experience, its weakness is being so heavily dependent on the researcher’s skill, training, intellect, discipline, and creativity. The researcher is the instrument of qualitative inquiry, so the quality of the research depends heavily on the qualities of that human being”.

The author of this thesis who also undertook all the research has worked in youth justice and community safety for over 20 years. During that time she has had interactions with a number of young people who have been at risk of

offending or involved in the criminal justice system. At some points the conversations were about the offenders and at other times about the victims. In order to offer a perspective a range of stances was taken from a research point a view. This was important so that both points of view could be heard and considered as it was important for each young person to feel that their contributions are valued. Nelken (1994) says:

"The choice of whether to examine crime from the point of view of the offender, victim, potential victim or controllers, for example, is never innocent of consequences".

This is important for me to take on board because it eliminates securing what could be a biased view but also at the same time putting young people at risk in terms of the information they share. With this in mind consideration was given to adherence to legislation like the Children Acts (1989 and 2004), the Data Protection Act (1998) and The Human Rights Act (1998) whilst at the same time ensuring that considerations were given to confidentiality, to individual rights and to informed consent.

In undertaking the research consent to engage and to then use the data gathered was of paramount importance. The realism of applying theory to this research was essential to maintain the anonymity of a number of people throughout the process. This was particularly important as I intended to talk to some of the young people who had already been found guilty of offences and served custodial sentences. I wanted to hear their stories without identifying them whilst at the same time not giving them opportunity to legitimise their behaviour; primarily because many of them thought that they had been wrongly accused and punished.

In terms of the research other ethical considerations given were in relation to the use of the research. This study has been done for the purpose of the course of study and chosen because of a personal interest in the subject. It has not been commissioned by anyone and the researcher does not necessarily have to do anything with the findings. However the core principles that lie at the heart of doing this research are to not only identify any link between inter racial conflict and identity but to consider some strategies for tackling inter racial conflict in the town by hearing what young people have to say. Professionals taking part in the research would become aware of the area of study and it would be anticipated that some of them would want to know what the outcome was. On this basis the researcher would ensure that young people know that their contributions to tackling inter racial conflict would be shared with professionals working in youth based projects and that this would include myself as someone having worked in this area for a number of years.

### **Sensitivity**

As this research is about people rather than library based it is imperative that issues around sensitivity are considered. Sieber (1992) defines 'socially sensitive' research as;

"studies in which there are potential consequences or implications either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research".

Renzetti and Lee (1990) define a 'sensitive' research topic as one that is "intimate, discreditable or incriminating". They build on this saying that sensitive research is "research which potentially poses a substantial threat to

those who are or have been involved in it" and outline three key areas where this can occur these being "intrusive, the threat of sanction and political threat". In this research a number of issues were recognised as being intrusive and threatening. These ranged from my relationship with a number of the professionals taking part in the semi structured interviews to community members sharing information that would be about the hostilities they felt about the situation and their experiences and finally the young people; many of whom were holding grudges and hostilities about the way they are treated in situations related to inter racial conflict.

In managing these I needed to also think about my own safety and therefore ensured that I worked with other people so I wouldn't be alone but also refreshed my facilitation skills as well as updated my skills on managing conflict situations. I also practiced a few scenarios with two very close colleagues whom I trusted and had also been working with in this area. Although I could not anticipate everything I prepared myself so that I could embrace the sensitivities that many of the people I would be meeting with had experienced and may want to share with me during the research.

Sensitive research can include research on a range of topics undertaken in a variety of locations and using a range of methods. In this research the young people were integral to the outcome and as such it was imperative that a relationship was developed in some cases this becoming a personal one as in maintaining a professional relationship but developing a relationship where the researcher develops the skills of a friend so that trust can be developed,

communication can take place and sharing of information becomes comfortable. Anne Oakley talks about the development of a personal relationship with those being researched but also warns that "personal involvement is more than dangerous bias – it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (1981). The positive side of this however is as stated by Stanley et al, (1996) is that:

"Sensitive research addresses some of society's most pressing social issues and policy questions. Although ignoring the ethical issues in sensitive research is not a responsible approach to science, shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is also an avoidance of responsibility".

In re-visiting the aim of this research an awareness of the motivations of the researcher needed to be open and transparent in order to embrace the concept of sensitive research and the impact that the methods may have on the research process. The thesis set out to give young people a 'voice'. On the face of this there would appear to be nothing complicated about this but when analysed a range of ethical issues were recognised at the outset. This included information shared in relation particularly to unjust convictions and then following the research what to do with all the information obtained. In all methods chosen the issues associated with protecting the identity of the participants was of concern and this was a priority that the researcher endeavored to maintain at all times.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

In undertaking the research a number of considerations were made in order to protect those involved from being identified. The research topic already defines

a small number of areas where this work would have been undertaken and it would take very little to identify the town that this research was carried out in. The most paramount concern for the researcher was to maintain the identity of those providing information. As such consideration was given to how the participants and the information provided by them would remain anonymous. Social Research Agency Ethical Guidelines (2003) state:

“The principle of informed consent is, in essence, an expression of belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between social researchers and human subjects. It is clearly not a precondition of all social enquiries. Equally it remains an important and highly valued professional norm. The acceptability of social research depends increasingly not only on technical considerations but also on the willingness of social researchers to accord respect to their subjects and to treat them with consideration”.

All of those interviewed were guaranteed anonymity and by tapping into the researchers existing network of professionals and clients some of the practicalities associated with confidentiality and anonymity were reduced as the elements of ‘trust’ were already in place. This of course could have proved to be a negative element of the research in that the information given may have been on par with what the participants thought the researcher might expect from them.

In undertaking the semi structured questionnaires those interviewed were identified only by a number and a code that related to their professional standing as in Chief Officer, Strategic Manager, Practitioner or Community Member and it was this that was then used for the data analysis. Information

pertinent to their profession as in council, police or community role was only known to the researcher.

This was particularly important to state when sending out the questionnaire as a comment for example coming from a Director or Head of Service within the council could lead to the person being easily identified due to the few numbers of people in that position. In the data analysis the respondents are grouped according to their responsibilities irrespective of the service they are coming from which enables a higher degree of anonymity.

In the ethnographic study with young people the anonymity took on a more complex position. The young people again were given a number but the researcher had to take care to be even more robust so that the identity of specific young people would remain anonymous particularly where they had been party to conflict with a member of another group, charged with offences or sharing information about another. Indeed the decision to not record on tape the conversations in the youth centers and activity sites was made consciously by the researcher in an effort to ensure that the 'voices' being sought did not then give their identities away. This of course resulted in lot of hard work in having to write down everything that was said. Young people were guaranteed that what they shared would remain confidential, however they were also informed that information provided relating to any offences they shared would have to be discussed with them at a later date. Where focus groups took place with some of the young people the numbering system continued and

participants were identified again through any previous number they had been given.

The dilemma that arose in relation to data gathering with the young people was in relation to collecting specifics around gender, age and ethnicity data. The researcher struggled with this as one or all of these could lead to the identification of some of the young people especially where some of those 'assisting' with the research had been the perpetrators and some had already served sentences for their part in previous incidents.

Social Research Agency Ethical Guidelines (2003) say:

"A particular configuration of attributes can, like a fingerprint, frequently identify its owner beyond reasonable doubt. Social researchers need to remove the opportunities for others to infer identities from their data. They may decide to group data in such a way as to disguise identities or to employ a variety of available measures that seek to impede the detection of identities".

The researcher believed that the information on age, gender and ethnicity was essential and although not scientific believed that the large cohort of young people being interviewed from each of the communities being investigated would assist in the reduction of identification of any particular young person.

## **Consent**

This involves more than requesting permission from the participants. All participants taking part in the research were given detailed briefings on the purpose of the research and were able to ask questions for clarification. Participants were also offered information on the incentive for the research and



the outcome for the material gathered. Issues around confidentiality and anonymity were discussed as well as ongoing feedback to those involved. As ethnographic research in particular is an open method of research with limited boundaries it creates not only the opportunities for an innovative piece of research but one in which ethical considerations can be encountered in all stages from outset to conclusion. Outlining the rights of the participants from the beginning can be an instrumental element in gaining and maintaining consent and alongside this each participant needs to know that they can withdraw or not talk about specific areas without there being any repercussions. Consent also comes in the form of engagement so if the young people are fully conversant with the purpose and expectations of the research their voluntary ongoing attendance could be taken as a willingness to be involved.

In the interview stage all requests were submitted with a request that they be honest and open with the knowledge that what they said was confidential. The researcher had to bear in mind that the information would have to be presented in such a way to maintain this. For example there are only three Chief Officers involved in the Luton Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership of which only one is female. As this is public knowledge in presenting what they said it would take very little to work out who may have said what. The assurance that statements made and then used were anonymised had to be thought through carefully as this could have implications for the individuals personally and professionally. This also applied to the person filling in the semi structured questionnaire. He or she had to determine whether they would volunteer for the research knowing what the implications could be for them even if

confidentiality was assured. The responses from those individuals in completing the questionnaire could again be seen as a form of voluntary consent.

Young people under the age of 18 may require parental consent and as such barriers imposed by adults may prevent the voices of young people being heard. The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines (Cornock, 2007) refer to a legal case which looked specifically at whether doctors should be able to give contraceptive advice or treatment to under 16-year-olds without parental consent. Since that time they have been more widely used to help assess whether a child has the maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions. It was ruled that:

“...whether or not a child is capable of giving the necessary consent will depend on the child’s maturity and understanding and the nature of the consent required. The child must be capable of making a reasonable assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the treatment proposed, so the consent, if given, can be properly and fairly described as true consent”.

The important element of this rule for consent is about how it is assessed and it is essential that a rigorous process is in place for this. Additionally some of the formal ethical requirements can be barriers in the engagement of particular groups. Addressing this can be overcome by continuing without formal parental consent as long as the research is respectful of the interests of this particular group (Alderson, 1995). In relation to the young people taking part in the study the application of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) clearly states children’s rights to express their views on all matters that affect them. However as Alderson, (1995) points out in “English law, ‘competent minors’ under 16 can give valid consent with

'competence' defined as having sufficient understanding and intelligence to understand what is proposed". The researcher made a judgment that the young people involved were competent enough to give consent to their involvement in the research.

It is important to acknowledge that once initial 'provisional' consent has been established, ongoing consent cannot be assumed but is negotiated in situated contexts on a minute-by-minute basis (Simons and Usher, 2000). Negotiating ongoing consent is difficult to control so during the process of gaining initial consent for my study I let the young people know that I was committed to being sensitive and receptive to any negative reactions they might have to being observed and recorded. I also maintained an open relationship with the staff and young people asking them to let me know if they felt that my presence was having an adverse effect.

### **Incentives**

The issue of payment was one that was considered for those taking part in the focus groups and for the young people. In the focus groups the researchers decision took the view as concluded by Shaw (2003) that informed consent requires voluntary participation. This debate however held difficulties in terms of the ethnographic study with the young people. Bearing in mind the length of time this would take payment for the young people was rejected on a cost basis and the research could not be funded over this period. The downside of this was that the participants could withdraw from the process at any time.

Additionally the young people involved in this research fall into a range of 'at risk groups' and as such become the subject of much research from those involved in anti social behaviour through to the issues that affect young people from BME groups. A number of the young people had been subject to other research and had been paid for their time. This created a difficulty for the researcher initially but was resolved through the support of the youth workers who supported the research aims and encouraged the young people to share their experiences for this particular research.

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

The research in its desire to listen to everything being said and utilising this to form a solution to the 'problem' strayed into the realms of research that could be considered as 'grounded'. This research method allows the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the participants and as such theory emerges from the information rather than the theory being used to channel the practice.

The research is also very much focused on the experience of young men from BME groups some of whom have had encounters with the criminal justice system. Additionally many of them have a range of negative experiences associated with the fact that they are 'Black' or 'Asian' and hold strong views about the way that they are treated because of this. Wilson (2006) states that race is a problematic issue that raises "all kinds of methodological and conceptual problems" a perspective shared by Pitts (2003) as well as Bowling and Phillips (2002). Wilson goes on to say that:

“in choosing to conduct research with young black people we might be accused of merely contributing to racial stereotypes rather than challenging them” (2006)

This becomes a dilemma for the researcher as enabling young people from these groups to verbalise their concerns may exacerbate stereotypical conceptions rather than undermine them. This should however not be a deterrent for researchers to shy away from undertaking this method of research with young people from BME groups.

In an attempt not to be accused of setting up the young people in order to gain information for the study but not address the issues they voiced; the researcher was open and honest from the outset about the purpose of the study, the reasons for using an ethnographic approach to capture the stories and the sharing of the information gathered to develop practice both as an individual but with colleagues.

#### **4.8 The Questions**

Having considered the relevance and appropriateness of the information required a series of questions were drawn up. These questions were designed to ensure that the core information required was collated but also be flexible enough to enable participants to develop them; enabling additional information to be gathered.

The final questions used for the basis of the research with all participants were as follows:-

1. Do you believe that inter racial conflict exists in our town?  
*(If your answer to this is NO, can you say why you believe this and then return the questionnaire? If it is YES continue on).*
2. In terms of inter racial conflict experienced in the town would you agree that this is primarily between South Asian young people and African Caribbean young people?  
*(If this is NO can you let me know what groups you think this exists between and then return the questionnaire. If YES continue on).*
3. In relation to how serious you believe this issue to be for the town can you comment on how it may affect you or those you know; how much of a concern is this to you? You may want to describe it as problematic, an issue we are managing to deal with, an emerging issue we are aware of but not of any great concern.
4. What do you think the source of the conflict between these groups is?
5. Is this conflict specific to young men or do you think that young women engage in this type of conflict? Are their roles any different?
6. Do you think that the young people involved in inter racial conflict are struggling with their own personal issues in terms of finding themselves; maybe looking for an identity.
7. In terms of tackling youth crime in our town and dealing with anti social behaviour amongst young people how much of concern is this to you and why?
8. One of the government's strategic priorities is about community cohesion. Does inter racial conflict amongst young people have any effect on us being able to build a cohesive town, and if so, what?
9. What solutions do you believe we need to implement to reduce or eliminate the conflict that occurs between young people from these cultural groups?
10. Anything else you would like to say on this issue that might assist in helping to understand issues associated with inter racial conflict between South Asian and African Caribbean young people.

The questions were sent out with an accompanying letter which outlined the purpose of the research. The invitation letter included within the context of the information supplied a definition of inter racial conflict; this being, "existing between or involving different races or cultural groups". Additionally a note was

added to ensure that debates were not overtaken by intra racial conflict; another area of conflict that exists in the town. The letter contained the following sentence to make this difference. Note: - This differs from **intra racial** which exists between or involves those of the same race or cultural group (as in Black on Black violence). It made particular reference to the fact that the research was focused on inter racial conflict between South Asian (Bengali and or Pakistani) and African Caribbean young people and asked for assistance in answering the following questions. Finally information around confidentiality was highlighted saying that "The answers that you provide are confidential and will only be used to draw out key themes. All responses are coded so other than me no other person will be able to identify you".

## **Chapter 5.**

## **RESEARCH PROCESS**

As outlined previously information used for the thesis has been extracted from a variety of sources, these being semi structured interview, an ethnographic study, a series of focus groups and some analysis of minutes taken at community meetings during a period of heightened inter racial tensions.

### **5.1 Qualitative Research Collated**

- The semi structured interviews produced 42 responses.
- The ethnographic study consisting of participant observation groups was undertaken with 51 consistent young people.
- Three focus groups were carried out with the same young people of whom a total of 24 young people were involved in a more in depth discussion.
- Six sets of notes from meetings were used for analysis taken during a period of heightened tensions.

### **Semi Structured Questionnaires**

Once the pilot phase had been undertaken these were then distributed as follows:-

- Chief Officers (CO) a total of 3 sent and 3 received
- Service Heads (SH) a total of 9 sent and 8 received
- Practitioners (P) a total of 11 sent and 9 received



- Youth Workers (YW) a total of 10 sent and 8 received
- Community Members (CM) a total of 17 sent and 14 received

A period of six weeks was set aside for the responses. These were sent by e mail and requests were made that these be returned either by e mail or by post. In most cases these were returned via e mail. This period was allowed as a number of the requests were being made to those with very full diaries and this would enable them an opportunity to have some time to complete it and provide more detailed answers rather than rushed answers due to time constraints. Completed surveys began to arrive within days and the vast majority were returned in the first two weeks; as expected most were returned electronically whilst others were posted. The last few arrived in the final week before the deadline.

Of the 50 requests made 42 responses were received. The return rate of 84% far exceeded the researcher's expectations and this was considered a success on the basis that a 50% return had been planned for. Most of the research that had been looked at when carrying out the literature review had very small samples and on this basis the researcher believed that the return for this research was exceptionally high and as such was a good representation. Even if the number of returns was to become a debate the researcher was more concerned with the quality of the information rather than the number of returns. These were numbered and the completed surveys were then checked to ensure that they had been numbered correctly.

## **Ethnographic Study**

This was as stated previously carried out over an 18 month period at two locations and as both the youth clubs were drop in centers there was always a different grouping of young people. Over the initial months a register was kept by the researcher of who was there and once regular members were identified they were then focused on for the study. Over the period of 18 months 51 constant young people were identified across the two youth clubs for information to be analysed from. The ethnicity and gender make up across the two centres were 26 African Caribbean (AC) 4 being female; 19 were South Asian (SA) 2 being female and 6 were White British (WB) 1 being female.

The researcher worked alongside the staff in both locations as a support worker in the role of an additional staff member rather than a lead worker or core staff member. This enabled the researcher to take the time out from the session to note and write down material that was to be used for the research and to have conversations with young people when comments or discussions that presented themselves arose. Using the methodology for participant observation the researcher maintained a methodical approach to recording the data to identify consistent conversations and themes.

Written material from the ethnographical study was vast and again an Excel sheet was created that helped the researcher to analyse the information according to themes.

## **Focus Groups**

The thesis is concerned with identity and seeks to make claims that inter racial conflict can evolve from fragile identities. In order to explore this some of the young people from the ethnographic study were brought together to talk about identity; the role of young women and where possible to clarify any issues that had been raised during the participant observation. Three focus groups were set up with the young people. Most of these young people were hand picked to attend primarily because the researcher wanted to ensure that information from specific perspectives could be gathered; which would then be triangulated with the data from the ethnographic study. This congruence would allow for information to be matched to see where there was agreement and similarities. Many of the young people in these focus groups had been perpetrators of inter racial conflict and were not always regular members of the youth clubs.

One of the focus groups was aimed at hearing the stories and exploring the attitudes of Black African Caribbean young men who had been involved in conflict with the South Asian young men. The other was set up to do the opposite. A third focus group was left open for anyone to attend but the researcher specifically encouraged some of the young women to attend. Altogether 29 different young people attended these focus groups.

## **Documentary Analysis**

Throughout the research period there were occurrences of heightened community tensions. One of these in particular proved to be significant in terms of the wider community issues. By analysing the minutes of six community meetings held during this period the data for the research was enhanced. The six community meetings were called during a three month period in light of criminal damage that occurred to the homes of elderly African Caribbean families; living in a primarily South Asian area called Bury Park.

The minutes were from meetings held as follows:-

African Caribbean community meeting (2)

South Asian Community meeting (1)

Police / Council – partners meeting (2)

Community Cohesion Meeting (1)

It was noted that a number of people at these meetings had filled in the semi structured questionnaire at the beginning of the research.

## **5.2. Analytic Methodology**

Collating qualitative data for analysis is a time consuming affair and the collection of words generated by interviews or observational data needs to be described and summarised. There are many analysis methods and these can be done through the use of software packages such as the Statistical Package

for the Social Sciences (SPSS) or though the one designed by the researcher.

Pope and Mays say:

“qualitative research is an interpretative and subjective exercise, and the researcher is intimately involved in the process, not aloof from it (2006).

There are a range of theories and methods in qualitative data analysis and having considered these the researcher has chosen to present these using a framework analysis approach. Although framework analysis may “generate theories; the prime concern is to describe and interpret what is happening in a particular setting” (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

Framework analysis is a general process providing a flexible means for qualitative analysis rather than being a highly explicit technique. It provides a practical structure to which the researcher can apply their own data. As such it can be applied to a wide variety of qualitative methods of data collection with differing aims and objectives.

Essentially Framework Analysis involves five key stages:

1. **Familiarisation** – process during which the researcher becomes familiar with the data collected (interview or focus group transcripts, observation or field notes). This may include all or part of the data collected.
2. **Identifying a thematic framework** – developing a coding framework from the emerging issues. This can be developed and re-defined as the research progresses. “The key issues, concepts and themes that have been

expressed by the participants now form the basis of a thematic framework that can be used to filter and classify the data” (Ritchie & Spencer 1994).

3. **Indexing** – the identification of the data that corresponds to particular themes and coding the information against these themes.
4. **Charting** - using headings from the thematic framework to create charts of your data so that you can easily read across the whole dataset.
5. **Mapping and interpretation** - this means searching for patterns, associations, concepts and explanations in your data.

“It is at this point that the researcher is cognizant of the objectives of qualitative analysis, which are: “defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies” (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

### **5.3 Presenting the Data**

The data gathered was vast and to focus on the presentation of the data the information gathered has been aligned to themes as suggested in the framework analysis method. These are taken from the 10 questions asked in the semi structured questionnaire which the ethnographic study, the focus groups and the minutes are then matched against. The information gathered is presented in the next Chapter and then analysed in Chapter 7. This is undertaken in relation to identity to make explicit links associated with how young peoples identity formation may be intertwined with inter racial conflict.

## **Chapter 6.**

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The first two questions asked in the interview schedule were designed to establish whether there was an issue in the town related to inter racial conflict and that this primarily but not exclusively involved members of the African Caribbean and the South Asian community. This question needed to be asked of a wide range of people working across the town as the young people's justification for the youth conflict taking place between these two community groups was hinged on this. Additionally the researcher needed to substantiate if the concern amongst young people was also a concern for the community and people working there.

### **6.1 Do subjects believe that there is inter-racial conflict in the town?**

Of the 42 questionnaires returned all but one person agreed that inter racial conflict according to the definition offered in the questionnaire existed in the town. They also agreed that this had been the case for a number of years; with the majority confirming that it had been an ongoing issue for the last 20 to 30 years. The one respondent who disagreed noted however that there were many issues of racism in the town but did not believe that the African Caribbean young people and South Asian young people were having any major difficulties.

In terms of the young people; all those involved in the study were regular attendees at the two youth clubs chosen and had been involved in previous

discussions as stated previously. Many of them had been involved in the conflict and a few had been incarcerated for incidents related to inter racial violence. From the ethnographic study and the focus groups all 51 of the young people involved in the research had stated that there was an ongoing conflict.

The level of concern of those who did acknowledge the existence of inter-racial conflict was explored via the following supplementary questions. The degree in terms of how extensive the problem appeared or was experienced differed across young people, the community and professionals.

### **Who's Kicking Who?**

All those that had responded to the first question agreeing that there was an issue of inter racial conflict (according to the definition given) in the town were asked to comment on which groups were involved in this. A range of answers were given; some identifying one specific group and others several.

The statements presented have not only been offered with the coded numbers but letters to depict who that response has come from. This is important to ensure that responses from young people (YP) can be differentiated if necessary from adult responses.

Of the 41 respondents all agreed that there was ongoing conflict between some young people from the African Caribbean and South Asian community. Of these 17 respondents made reference to conflict between the South Asian and White



young people; although all agreed with the statement "there is some conflict in the town that exists between the South Asian community and the White community; however this is an area of racial conflict that has a long history in the town that will no doubt remain for a while to come" (YW6). Of the same 17 respondents 2 believed that there were issues between the Blacks and Whites and referred again to "racist attitudes of some of the Whites in the town" (P8). Of the same group 11 believed that there was conflict occurring between Asian and Polish young people of which 5 believed that this was instigated by the South Asians. One respondent said "It seems that the Muslims have a problem they just have to find a reason to fight; they don't like anyone" (P3).

The conflict that occurred was seen as occurring between boys in the main and although they were not all involved directly it was felt that many were observers or became embroiled in the aftermath through association. "Once the conflict starts you don't have a choice but to make a stand. The Asians don't care if you were involved or not when they come looking they just looking for a Black boy. I expect it's the same for the Asians.. we go out looking for them; our boys don't care if they were involved or not.. lots of innocent people get hurt" (YW6). One young man attending the youth club one evening with his friend made reference to the South Asian young people not focussing on the individuals who had perpetrated the violence but just going after any cultural group that looked right. He said that "Sometimes the Asian kids; they pick on the African's; that's...cos. well...Pakis they thinks it's us... don't they?" (ACYP7) Another young person made reference to the fact that the African Caribbean lads did go out and give the "Asians a beating" but they were always ones that

had been involved in an incident with them. The Asians "they don't care who they beating up... they got problems; they just pick on anyone....yeh and they always get away with it.. us we get the pigs.... they always get us" (ACYP11).

It was noted that young people used a lot of derogatory terminology like the use of 'Paki' and 'Nigger' without actually knowing where these words came from and the researcher had to make a decision about whether to challenge them on the use of the words at the expense of losing the contributions to the study. These were noted as things to take up with the youth workers at the end of the research.

A community member involved in the Residents Association when asked for her view commented that conflict amongst young people in the town was not a new phenomena this had taken place for at least the last 50 years that she had been living in the area. "The Black and White issue has probably not been a problem since the late 80's. They had plenty of friction before that" (CM12). She went on to say that the conflict was then between the Whites and the Asians in the late 70's early 80's but that now "the Whites can't be bothered and just let them...(meaning the African Caribbean and South Asian young people) get on with it. Less of them to worry about... I guess". One young man observed "I ain't got problems with no one... don't know what's going down with the Black boys and their Asian brothers. They always at it (fighting) like they have something to prove" (WYP4).

The four youth workers employed in the youth clubs where the young people involved in the study were drawn from made reference to the conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young people. One stated that "It's an ongoing issue that has been prevalent in the town for a number of years. It will continue to be so for many years to come; there is no easy solution to this" (YW5). Another said I have been working with the African Caribbean community for a long time many of the young people attend this youth centre have very hostile feelings about the Asians.. they are very deep" (YW2). He went on to say that he believed the feelings that many young African Caribbean men held about the Muslims had intensified in the 8 years that he had been doing the job.

One Black young person believed that the present conflict was instigated by South Asian young men:

"This is about the Asians and the rest of the world. They got problems with everyone, the Blacks, the Whites, the Polish... In fact they have issues amongst themselves. Them Bengali's and Paki's....well they even fight amongst themselves. There's always trouble up at their school" (ACYP16).

Many young people from both the African Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds made references about the other. African Caribbean young people were always threatening to give the other a "good kicking" (ACYP2;9;11;15 and 21) and in turn the South Asian young people referred to the African Caribbean young people as a group that had "a chip on their shoulder" (SAYP17) suggesting that "they've always got something to prove" (SAYP19). Some interesting conversations about the "Blacks knowing their place" (SAYP12) were heard. Linked to a couple of other comments I summarised that this comment

was related to the South Asian young people being viewed by the African Caribbean young people as being weaker than them and that they were more superior in terms of "being tougher" (ACYP7). Both groups expressed that there was a "problem" in the town between the "Asian boys and the Black boys" but seemed to be unable to say where this conflict started. There were lots of conversations about what each had done to others and due to the long running situation it had reached a point where many young people thought "it actually don't matter who started; they got it in for us and we ain't going let them get us (SAYP6).

Reference to the conflict that existed between the African Caribbean and South Asian community was made by respondents at all professional levels. The data revealed that whilst there were other incidents of inter racial conflict amongst some young people; in the main this occurred between young people who were Black or South Asian.

Having done the research and reflecting on the first and second questions I feel that there was no need to have asked these question in terms of getting a yes or no answer and the identification of who is involved in the conflict. The research topic was chosen and pursued because of ongoing conflicts of inter racial conflict between African Caribbean and South Asian young people. If I was to do this again my initial letter would have been to outline the purpose of the research in terms of setting the scene about the incidents; using documented evidence and then ask about concerns and issues related to this. Although the information received was interesting it was information that could

be found in minutes of meetings, newspaper clips and reports produced after the events.

### **How serious are the conflicts between African Caribbean and South Asian young people?**

Having gathered evidence concerning the existence of inter racial conflict between South Asian and African Caribbean young people; I turned to the question of how serious this was in terms of frequency and involvement. The interviewees were asked to consider if this was of low level and something that the town and those working with it were managing, as it did not affect others. Alternatively whether this was an area of concern and that some strategic planning needed to be undertaken to look at how it was going to be managed and dealt with. Finally they were asked to comment on whether they believe this to be a serious issue that affected them on a personal and professional level where it was having an impact on the residents or community members or their professional responsibilities.

Using these three levels 8 respondents rated the seriousness as of a low level whilst 23 believed that this was a problem that we had failed to grasp and needed to think about dealing with as part of developing a strategy. Ten believed that the situation was hostile and that the feelings between the South Asian community and the African Caribbean was nearing or beyond repair.

Of those believing it to be of little importance comments received from respondents included "we've just got used to it now... they don't bother me. As long as it stays like that I just get on with what I am doing" (CM2). Another said "young people always have some issues.. it would be with this group or another; they just don't like each other and you can't make them. Hell...I don't like my neighbour and it only bothers me and her.. no one else" (CM4). "We have had youth conflict in our school for many years .... at least five. Something triggers it off from the outside and then it escalates. Once it's all sorted out we might not have any problems for months. I am not saying we don't worry we do but we deal with it when it happens" (P2).

As stated many more respondents were concerned about the ongoing incidents of inter racial conflict between the African Caribbean and South Asian young people. Responses included "This is an issue that we have made no attempt to deal with; in fact it seems like we are just hiding our head in the sand. We have ongoing groups of young men getting into conflict with each other about issues they have long forgotten and because each side must have the last stand it goes on and on" (CM12).

Those young people who talked of this being a serious conflict in nearly all cases made reference to "when things go too far" (SAYP4). "It's fine till one side ups the score then we move to serious weapons ... someone gets hurt ... like Kamran.... that went too far...big problems that divided us even more. Fighting is one thing .. killing is another" (SAYP17).

African Caribbean young people held the same sentiments one saying "no one's bothered about us and the Asians; they just let us get on wiv it... we have a bit of a fight and then its sorted for the time" (ACYP3) or "it's only a problem when the fighting gets too serious and someone gets hurt but most of the time it's just between us and them" (ACYP14).

A local police officer stated that "there is an issue of conflict between the African Caribbean and the South Asian Muslim community that has been going on for the 30 years that I have been a police officer and has never been dealt with" (P6). Most practitioners believed that the conflict between these groups was a perennial feature of their relationship but that "it has its high and lows" (YW3).

Several practitioners agreed to this being a problematic issue but felt that in the bigger picture it was not the most important thing that they had to deal with.

"It is a problem that we are aware of and trying to manage. I am not sure we are having any real impact. I feel there are a lot more issues going on that we need to be working on that cause distress to the community" (P2).

In terms of those who believed that the relationship between many members of the two communities particularly young people had reached a serious point and that it would need some serious intervention to start to consider how they could be brought together; one practitioner said "this is an escalating issue that we do not seem to be able to do much about" (P3). One youth worker interviewed believed that "this is a major problem and concerns me and many of my colleagues who work with young people in our youth clubs and on the streets

every day" (YW4). Another said "it is only by luck that we have not had a riot ... that lot in the Town Hall must breathe a sigh of relief every day" (YW2). These views were echoed in interviews with some of the community members; several of whom observed that it was only a matter of luck that the town had not experienced disturbances like the 'northern riots' of 2005 (CM7).

One of the practitioners noted his frustration in that he had tried to get this on the agenda for discussion several times and it had been moved into the community cohesion discussion. "I am not sure what it is they (the council) don't want to look at but we cannot keep integrating this discussion into the 'building safer communities' agenda. We need to start sitting down and talking with the community" (P3). One of the Church Leaders raised concerns that this was "very concerning to me, we have a whole generation of young people who have lost their way" (CM10) referring to the African Caribbean community. He went on to say "It seems that when it is our community the police and the council are not interested; they focus their energies on making sure that the Muslim community are happy. We do not get the same treatment".

Whilst the African Caribbean community would consider this a fair assessment in relation to the way they are treated; the police would say that this is a perception and that it is not substantiated. This statement was raised in two of the community meetings attended and on both occasions the police addressed these claims as incorrect (SH6). The police agreed that there were issues between the two communities but denied that they treated or favoured one group over the other.



One community member said "it doesn't appear to be managed very well as every so often it results in serious crimes and major assaults on members of each of the two ethnic groups; conflict between Caribbean and Asian young people in this town doesn't appear to be an issue that will be easily resolved" (CM4).

Another community member said that:

"Inter racial conflict is a problem for the town. It was a big issue with the Black and Whites. It was really extreme then... things are better now, even though we still have problems. Even though the Asian young people are always picking on other groups what happens now is that we involve the community better (CM3).

The data provided from the practitioners along with the information gathered from the young people evidenced a varied view on the extent of the issue of conflict that was taking place between the African Caribbean and South Asian community; particularly many young people. It would appear that there is a need for a consistent stand amongst practitioners and those managing the service. Chief Officers need to consider the level of seriousness that these incidents hold in relation to the community safety priorities.

On reflection this question was useful in identifying the level of seriousness different people felt about the ensuing conflict. As useful as this was in gaining an insight to different perspectives that respondents held it added very little to how identity and inter racial conflict impact on each other. I could have undertaken the research without the need of needing this information explicitly and again with the two earlier questions utilised other available information to scene set the work of this thesis.

## **6.2 Sources of the Conflict?**

What did appear to be consistent in the data were the sources of where this conflict lay between the two groups and although a range of perspectives were offered the information was confirmed at several levels; including what many young people had to say. A number of areas were identified as to where this had come from and why it remained so. Issues around identity and conflict primarily fell into one of these areas:-

- Older member's experiences of early life and continuing life in Luton and how they were able to influence
- Young people's influence by their parents and other family members.
- Young people's experience of each other.
- Community Leaders.
- Policing.
- Drug Sales.
- Territorial Spaces.

### **Historical Experiences**

Many respondents commented upon the role of history and its influence on the current conflict. The history they identified as influential was the history of immigration in the town. No respondent made explicit reference to the history of colonialism cited in the literature review but this is not to say that it does not have a powerful influence on contemporary attitudes and events. All those who considered the historical aspect of inter racial conflict in the town identified the arrival of the South Asian community in the predominately African Caribbean

neighbourhood as the pivotal event at a time when African Caribbean communities were starting to feel settled and accepted in the town.

From the research, issues that held historical significance for the African Caribbean community have been part of their lives since they first resided in the town in the late 50's. The town was predominately White with an area referred to as Bury Park having an established Irish migrant population who had settled there in the preceding ten years; taking up jobs at the two main Industrial plants in the town. Bury Park was one of the poorest wards in the town and many lived in council homes in the area; saving to purchase their own homes. Most people moved initially to this area because of social or cheap housing not from choice. This is particular pertinent for those from minority groups. Research like that carried out by Sarre et al, (1989) found that:

"ethnic minority groups are 1.5 times more likely than the White group to enter a deprived neighbourhood, 1.2 times more likely to enter an ethnic concentration neighbourhood and 1.6 times more likely to enter a neighbourhood with high levels of deprivation and ethnic concentration".

During this period the Caribbean community grew and they too secured employment at the two industrial factories in the town. Within about 5 years they started to purchase homes and many African Caribbean families and Irish families worked alongside each other; building what was to become long lasting friendships. As one Caribbean community member said:

"Some of the Irish people became our best friends, we looked out for each other's children, we shared the early shifts and the late shifts at the work, one covering for the other if sick, We kept our jobs, there was no competition, we all got along well" (CM12).

Some of the African Caribbean community members opened local shops; mostly barbers, hairdressers or shops selling Caribbean food. In the mid 70's the first wave of immigration from the South Asian continent made its mark in the area. Pakistani and Bengali families came into the area as the housing was cheaper and because the council were housing them there. As the Irish families became financially stable they bought homes out of the area. Many African Caribbean families found that their neighbours were from Pakistan or Bangladesh but found that they did not socialise with them like the Irish community but built their own family and friendship networks. Some of this could be linked to language as identified by some of the comments made by older members of the South Asian Community.

The self-imposed segregation of the South Asian community was raised several times by those in the research. One community member said "the Muslims didn't want to integrate they set up their own communities with their own shops so they don't have to mix with other people" (YW6). "When the Asians came to live in Luton they started to run everyone out the area. They made your life difficult so you would go" (P4). The ways in which they did this were identified in the research as purchasing homes and opening both grocery shops and fast food shops in the area (CM4). Over a number of years the South Asian community then built mosques, opened restaurants and community centres (CM6 and 11).

Relationships between the African Caribbean and South Asian were "extremely fragile" (CM5) in the area and many African Caribbean families sold their homes

for less than the market value to move out of the area; many believed that they were “pushed out” (CM12) as a means of taking over the area. Many felt that the council was supporting this as they would grant licences for numerous fast food outlets and grocery shops selling the same things to assist them in taking control of the area. The African Caribbean community believed that the council had “pampered to the wishes of the Asian community” (CM3) particularly when it came to granting planning permission. “We have been abused by the council; they have always treated us as second class citizens... we have always had to struggle to get what we want; everyone walks all over us” (CM6).

Relationships were probably at there most tense when the increased number of Asian shops began to infringe on the sales of items that the African Caribbean shops were dependent on. The Asian shopkeepers started selling traditional African Caribbean products like hair products and food items. Many outlet stores were set up selling these products that provided wholesale prices and encouraged the Black community to purchase items from them:

“Even though you didn’t want to buy from them; the things there were so much cheaper and when you struggling you have to go where it’s cheaper” (CM9).

This added to the resentment held by African Caribbean members as the South Asians and caused disenchantment amongst the members of the African Caribbean community. What seemed to happen was that a situation had arisen where although those from the African Caribbean community did not want to support Asian shops they had been forced to compromise their values as well as in some circumstances be rejected by their peers for their actions.

The South Asian community members had their own comments about how they were treated. One said:

"The Asians were the worst treated when they came here, but they aren't anymore. What happened is that the young people saw what happened to their parents and they were not going to let themselves get treated that badly so they make sure people know that they are not going to put up with it" (CM9).

One of the youth workers said:

"I remember having bricks thrown through our house by Blacks so we could come out and then they could throw things at us" (SAYW3).

And a community member commented that:

"Lots of Asians have worked hard for what they have; they ain't going to let no one take anything away from them" (CM8).

Eventually most African Caribbean families moved out of the area; many closing the shops that had been their livelihood. However to date there remain a small number of homes where African Caribbean families have resided for nearly forty years. In the last major set of incidents many of these homes suffered criminal damage. One of the practitioners said "I believe that some of this was orchestrated. The South Asian community (and we are talking mostly of Pakistanis who are Muslim) want to get the last remaining Blacks and Whites out of the area" (P7) He went on to say:

"The movers and the shakers (meaning the community leaders) said all the right things but there was sympathy with those that were doing this. I know this because I am sure that the local people knew who was committing the crimes; they had information but they would not come forward to provide that information so that the police could investigate and make arrests. They are a close knit community and they know what is going on".

For many people, practitioners, community members and young people there was a feeling that the town is run by the Asians and that they dominate what

happens. This had left the African Caribbean community with a lot of frustration. The result of this was that the African Caribbean community members shouted a lot but felt that their concerns fell on deaf ears and that the Asians were the "favoured ones" (CM6) and as such the African Caribbean Community was seen as an annoyance rather than anything else. "Sometimes things are done for us; they are tokenistic but they are just to keep us quiet" (CM5).

The African Caribbean community believe that this ability to maintain power and dominance has continued and is interlinked with a range of other issues; particularly about how money is spent and funding allocated. This will be discussed later.

### **Family Influence on Young People**

Of the 42 questionnaires received 29 of them mentioned family as a source for determining whether young people had positive or negative views about other ethnic, cultural or religious groups. Of the 9 practitioners working directly with young people in a range of settings all of them commented on the difficulties Muslim young people in particular had in relation to being able to "honour the family values, traditions and religion ... Whilst also wanting to spend time with their British friends" (P5). They felt concern for the South Asian young people who they believed were "torn between the cultures" (P5). This feeling did not seem to apply to the African Caribbean community although many mentioned the difficulties they had trying to get young people from these cultures to take

part in joint activities. Although planned events were for all the African Caribbean young people and the South Asian young people would often work with their own cultural group. One commented that she had been told by a young person "I ain't playing with them (The Black children) my mom says not to be with them" (P4).

A Head of Service talking about family influence said:

"From my perspective, racial and cultural prejudice from older generations influences the young people from these two communities heavily. As conflict between Caribbean and South Asian individuals is not a new phenomenon in Luton I feel the continuing and escalating unrest between the two groups in years past has filtered down to younger generations and bred messages of negativity from their parents" (P7).

Young people whilst being socialised from early childhood are also exposed to comments in the home that can enable them to hold stereotypical views of others. It appeared from the data that this can sometimes play a part in the conflict. "its not just what my parents say it's the way they say it; they can make me believe things even though I may not have experienced it myself" (SAYP14). My parents tell me to stay away from the Black kids "they carry knives... don't upset them... they will stab you" (SAYP18). South Asian young people are told that the "Black community don't trust the police" and that "they take the law into their own hands...you may get killed" (SAYP15). "Lots of things that are said in the home to us can instigate what happens outside" (SAYP15). A number of young people spoke about the derogatory comments that their parents would say about other racial groups. Many young people said that they had been influenced by these comments even though many said "I



don't really meet any Black people or spend time with them so I don't get to know if what my parents say it right or not" (SAYP2).

One African Caribbean young person said that "my mom says don't trust them, they want everything they can get their hands on, if you close your eyes they will take the shirt of ya back" (ACYP17). Another said that my family can't stand them damn Asians; but I don't need them to tell me not to trust them. I can see that for myself" (ACYP23).

The youth workers had many comments to make blaming the family for many of the problems. In terms of comments directed at the South Asian young people one said that parents had to be supportive in helping young Muslims to be who they are but also to embrace other cultures.

"Muslim young people need to find a way of keeping their values and faith and being part of the British culture without having to go to the extreme of fighting with others" (YW8).

Another said that:

"They want to be good Muslims but they also want the nice clothes, the cars and women. They are "player haters", they want what everyone else has and they hate them for having it. They need to celebrate what others have and find some way of being able to have things without it affecting their faith. They can't just take it out on everyone" (YW7).

The expectation of South Asian parents was commented on and the threat that is held over their young people. One of the youth workers said:

"We went to a residential with some young people. The two Asian boys had a few drinks, they shouldn't have but they did, they got a bit drunk and we sorted it. All they kept saying was "don't tell my parents, we will get sent back to Pakistan" (YW3).

A community member also commented on how South Asian parents operate:

"It seems that their families keep them on the straight and narrow by threatening them with being shipped off to Pakistan or Bangladesh. This happens with lots of the Muslim boys who get into problems. Parents' need to see that it's hard for the young people and find some way of helping them to fit in with their own culture but in the country that they live in. At the end of the day, the young people do all kinds of things but they still maintain their Muslim values, they should be happy" (CM3).

African Caribbean parents were criticised by a number of the respondents from their own community. One community member from the AC community said "The Black boys have lost their values. They were bought up in Christian families. I believe the parents of Black children seem to be closing their eyes to what they do" (CM5). Another member of the community said:

"Tell me how a parent cannot know that their child had bought a knife or gun into the house. When I was growing up I wouldn't dare bring even a cigarette in the house. We lived in God Fearing families. Our mothers were the important parts of the family... you never disrespected your mother and bringing knives and guns in the house is disrespect" (CM6).

And another person said:

"Mothers are closing their eyes to what their children are up to. They need to go back to keeping an eye on them. The Blacks have lost respect for who they are...they doing all kinds of stupid stuff they never would do" (YW6).

The data evidenced the different attitudes towards how parents were viewed by their peers in this particular situation. It would appear that whilst children in South Asian families criticised their parents for the way that they tried to influence them in making their "own decisions" (SAYP19) and living their own lives (SAYP18), very few young people criticised their parents for making

derogatory and insulting remarks about other communities; particularly those from the African Caribbean community.

In the African Caribbean community young people rarely criticised their parents or older members of the community; however criticism related to parenting of African Caribbean children and directed primarily at those that had turned out "bad" (ACCM3) came from within the community. Judgements on parenting came from their peers 'snobbery' about how children turned out. They would often speak of the "good families" from the "bad families". These were also embroiled in Caribbean island attitudes as in big island people versus small island people. It became apparent that those from the big island like Jamaica were the "troublesome ones" (ACYW4).

The views that were held by older members of the community appeared in many comments and there was significant link to how these impacted on the views of a number of the young people who took part in the research.

### **Young People's Experience of each other**

By the mid 80's their children were a growing population in the local primary school and at the by the end of the eighties 76% of all primary school children in the Bury Park area schools were from a South Asian background (LBC 1990) and by the mid 90's all three of the High Schools in the area had over 85% of South Asian Pupils on the school roll.

Most of the white Irish families had moved out of the area and many of the African Caribbean had also moved out but there were still a significant number that did not have the means or the desire to move. African Caribbean children and the increasing number of the South Asian children started to interact in primary and high schools in the area. The conflict between the two seems in most cases to occur after they have left primary school occurring at high school, out in the community or later on at college.

A few of the African Caribbean young men made comments that they thought that the Asian boys are always playing catch up and wanted what they had. "They are trying to catch up with the Blacks and the Whites. They want what they have" (ACYP18) In more detailed conversations through one of the focus groups this was picked up to determine why they believed this and whether it was linked to having less than their Black or White counterparts.

The young men in the focus groups did not think it was about being worse off materially they thought that things like music, dress, dance and "getting the girl" (ACYP12) were more readily available and easier for the Black and White communities to be part of. They believed that the Asian young people didn't have the modern music and dress that they had so they needed to steal their dress sense and their music. In the focus group discussions they also made reference to the fact that most of the "Asian boys are Muslims" and "they can't drink...but you know they really do....they can't just do it in the open" (ACYP22). "They have to come to the pubs and clubs because they don't have any of their own" (ACYP14). Some of these conversations but not all have

links to some of the young people's experiences of identity theft mentioned previously.

### **Community Leaders**

When inter racial violence occurs amongst young people in the town the council and police defer to a model that seems to be practised in many other diverse areas which is to call upon the community leaders to manage community tensions between these groups. These community leaders are often identified by the police and council as people that the community trust and look up to. The specification to this job appears to be from the discussions that took place that they are either the Imams in the South Asian community or church leaders in the African Caribbean community. They had become the first point of contact for the council and the police when tensions were high. One community member said that the idea was not without its problems stating that:

"We get the elders involved, the Imam and the Church Leaders then they try and talk to the young people and talk about the problems. Sometime they might be a hindrance, but they are more of a help than a hindrance, at least they doing more than the police" (CM13)

A number of other respondents in the research were critical of the community leaders and found that they were of no assistance; if anything they could be identified as being part of the problems.

"The community leaders are self elected. They are detached from the young people, they have no idea what the issues are. You get only their opinion. They are the last people you should look to for statement" (P7).

Many young people commented about the influence that these so called community leaders have on them.

“Young people do not listen to the Imam, or their Church Leaders. The young people involved in these issues, don’t go to Church or Mosques” (CM2). The Elders in the community are out of touch with us, you can’t ask them to talk to us..... they don’t even understand us. If anything they make matters worse” (SAYP9).

This is borne out several times in the research where both young people from the African Caribbean community and the South Asian community talk about faith. Numerous African Caribbean young people talked about church being somewhere their parents or grandparents went to (ACYP2;5;13;18 and 23). They didn’t see a place for them in church. Even more of them talked about how “boring” it was. Many Muslim young people affirmed the same attitude to going to the Mosque with comments that they “had to go” SAYP5;15 and 21) “had to be seen to go” (SAYP16) and it was easier than having to “deal with the whole community” (SAYP17).

What came out of the research was that African Caribbean young people in the main could refuse to go to church with little consequence. South Asian young people on the other hand could suffer consequences both from the family and the community and as such would attend Mosque rather than have to experience this.

Many young Bengali and Pakistani young people felt betrayed by the leaders in their communities believing that “they cause lots of the problems” (SAYP6). The majority of the young people who talked of community leaders did not recognise these people as representing their views but only those of their parents and grandparents. The young people involved in the study saw

themselves as a “new generation” of young people who were not willing to accept some of the things that they saw their parents being tolerant about. This was consistent in both discussions with South Asian and African Caribbean young people, demonstrating that whilst they deny the influence that their elders have on them they are still involved in violence that can be influenced by the family as we saw previously.

Many young people felt that those people who were considered community leaders were unable to support them as they had little or no knowledge about young people’s lives today and that “they haven’t moved on; they think everything is the same as when they were young” (ACYP17).

Many young people believed that they should be allowed to identify their own leaders or spokespeople and that these should be people who the police and council recognise as those that can speak on their behalf. Indeed:

“Cantle, Clarke, Ouseley and Ritchie all draw attention to the extent which young people’s voices have been largely ignored by decision makers in the areas where there were disturbances. Some young people complained that the older community and religious leaders who claimed to represent them failed to articulate the experiences of the young” (Denham, 2001).

This research brought out this comment several times, with young people speaking about self selecting their own community leaders who could represent their views.

## **Policing**

The Chief Officers of the town did not commit themselves to any comments around policing other than to say that "the police have an incredibly hard job to undertake and did very well with the limited resources available" (CO2). Strategic Managers made almost no comments about the police other than again to confirm what a good job they were doing. Youth Workers and Community members had lots to say about policing and many of the comments were located in their personal experience and determined by the racial group that they represented. Older members of the community also had a different perspective of the police to that of young people.

Several points came out that were common amongst the group. Some spoke of people they knew who had been the victims of crime and the police response had been very slow (some young people had been mugged and had no contact from the police for up to a week). Others talked of certain areas in the town where there is lots of "bad stuff" happening but you rarely see a police officer in these areas. This made young people feel unsafe in certain areas of the town. Such negative perceptions and encounters with the police were instrumental in the way that the young people viewed the police.

It was interesting that the group had also had some positive encounters with police officers but had not told friends of these as it was not "cool" to speak in a positive way about the police. In fact there was a culture within young people to be rude or cheeky when speaking to the police; often linked to peer pressure. This "egging" the police on was not confined to one or either of the



communities being researched. Both the African Caribbean young people and the South Asian young people seemed to enjoy this past time.

There was also a perception that uniform equals trouble. If a young person was seen to speak to the police it was felt that adults or community members who saw this would automatically assume that the young person was in trouble. It may then be fed back to other community members or even the parents that the young person had been seen with the police and that they had probably been in trouble!

It was also perceived that some police officers are racist. This was based on an assumption that the police stop more young Asian and Black young people than British white young people. The way that police operate in the town was a source of contention. Whilst both the South Asian Community and the African community were critical of the policing methods aimed at each; the African Caribbean community were incensed by the differential treatment that they thought they received believing that the South Asian community had the "police in their pocket" (CM5). One community member said:

"You will never see the police break down an Asian house in the middle of the night, no...we have to be sensitive if we go to a Muslim house. If they don't do the right thing the politicians make their life hard. They have to answer to the Asian councillors" (CM9).

One of the youth workers said:

They (the police) can get away with treating Black people any how they like. They always stop them on the street for no reason. They have a bad attitude when it comes to black boys (ACYP7)

The young people believed that the "police always arrest them then ask questions later" (ACYP8) another said, "they see a fight and they come and arrest us ... they always let the Asians go" (ACYP9). "We always get remand at the police station but the Asian lot, if they get arrested they get bail" (ACYP14).

There were numerous stories about the incident that involved the death of Kamran and every young person had a version. This one incident had served to breakdown nearly all relationships with between the African Caribbean and South Asian young people and had in many ways escalated previous problems.

These words come from one of the boys who received a custodial sentence for his part in one of the incidents that occurred:

"Our little brothers got picked on in town by some Asian boys and they called the police but they never came. Next time the Asian dudes throw our little brothers in the river and the police never came. We was in the park with our little brothers and they pointed to the Asian boys when they saw them. We got into a fight with them; they called for backup. It was 10 of us and 50 of them and then (xxx) pulled out a knife and stabbed one in the leg to frighten them; he had a little cut. The police got called because a Paki got stabbed...and guess what hundreds of officers came....we got arrested. The ambulance came and the gate was locked so they couldn't get in. When they open the gate the boy bleed to death and then we all got charged for manslaughter" (ACYP18).

Although this is not the whole story it is the one that means most to this young person and the group that were arrested and then served custodial sentences for Kamran's death. They talk of the injustice that took place because if the police had done what they should have done in the first place then a death might not have occurred; which then led to custodial sentences given out to not only the person who stabbed Kamran but to those that were with him at the

time. They feel that this incident is what in many cases stops the African Caribbean young people and many members of their community from ever having faith in the police. They see this as the way that they treat young people; primarily males from the African Caribbean community. One young person said:

“if the tables were turned the Asians would never have been treated this way, the police would have come out straight away if they said we getting beat up by some Black kids” (ACYP20).

The community members also register strong concerns about policing in the town and that it is for these reasons that the “young people get into conflict with the Asians. They think that they have to sort everything out themselves because no one wants to listen to Black people in this town” (CM12).

Some of the consistent statements made by community members and youth workers throughout the research were around the treatment that the community received from the police. The data analysis identified a range of overwhelming feelings held by the African Caribbean community in terms of their relationship with the police and how they were viewed. These were repeated consistently across the questionnaires and in many of the youth club discussions that took place with young people. The statements have been linked to the respondents who were members or representatives of the African Caribbean community. In total thirty four people are identified to fit this category. The statements are listed with the number of times it was raised. Some of the statements were aimed at the police and the council.

- The Police are not trusted by the African Caribbean community – commented on by 29 respondents.
- Police do not respond to victimisation of the African Caribbean community early enough and do not give the incidents sufficient priority – comments from 26 respondents.
- The Black community do not feel that the Police (and the council) treat us fairly – commented on by 21 respondents.
- The black community need to see some action from the Police (and the council) – raised by 18 respondents.
- Other communities get more resources than the black community – commented by 26 respondents.
- The Police (and the council) should work with leaders of the Black community raised by 12 respondents.
- The Police should be investigated – raised by 5 respondents.

In 4 of the cases specific reference was made that this should be done by a national body like the Commission for Racial Equality and not the Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

One respondent made a particular reference that a person from the community was now a member of the IAG and that she had switched sides supporting the police rather than the community.

“I don’t trust that panel... they get on there and then their heads them get big... they not interested in us... they want to move up so they stay with the police” (CM11).

The evidence substantiates the feelings that are widely held by the African Caribbean community about the police and in many cases the council. This would appear to be in tension with what the council says:

“We have invested a lot of time working with the African Caribbean community and yes we had some difficulties but we are getting along much better now with many of the Black groups” (SH4).

Another person also holding a similar position said:

“We have an excellent dialogue going with the African Caribbean community representatives. We are starting to look at how we can work better with them to meet their needs” (SH8).

From the police force, one of the Chief Officers said that:

“relationships within the African Caribbean community were not as strong as we would wish but we have a good relationship with them and we are able to debate the issues of concern through community meetings” (CO2).

Another member of the police force appeared to be more willing to recognise the scale of the problem:

“There is much to do to build any type of relationship with the African Caribbean community. This will take a long time, they do not trust as. From their point of view some police have treated them badly...Unfortunately it went on for so long it is going to take some time to even get them to sit down and talk to us” (P7).

What became clear in the research was that the perceptions that Officers and practitioners had about their relationship with the African Caribbean community were at odds with the responses given in the research by local residents, community members and young people. Although a number of the community members had been to the police consultative forums they believed that they were “talking shops... they just want to say they have met with us but they don’t hear what we say; either that or they don’t care” (CM9).

Many South Asian young people also criticised the police for the way that they are dealt with. They did not give specific examples of where this had happened but as a general rule most young South Asian boys thought the police were racist and treated people from BME groups badly. While the African Caribbean community were very vocal about policing either through their written responses or in terms of the young people orally; the South Asian community seemed to provide very subdued answers.

What seemed to emerge from the research is that that there are very different perspectives on the role of the police and that people's point of view on this issue appears to be related to, in many cases personal experience or their social position as in a professional capacity.

## **Drugs**

The history of drug selling in the town could have some links to inter racial conflict between these groups as it had changed hands in the past 10 years. It is another example as highlighted below of how the African Caribbean young people feel that they have been "squeezed" out of the drug selling market.

The town has like most inner city areas problematic drug use and selling. For a long period of time the African Caribbean Community were known to run the drug market in the town selling primarily Cannabis. When the South Asian community settled in the town heroin became a popular drug and they were linked with the heroin market. Young people living in low income, high poverty areas with little opportunities to increase their wealth chose to support the demand for drugs by becoming salespeople. Heroin prices were slashed in order to compete with the cannabis market and as such many users opted for the cheaper drug irrespective of the differing health risks. It was not long before heroin became the drug of choice and the South Asian drug dealers once they had captured the African Caribbean community then started to supply them with cannabis at a cheaper rate. Several comments in the research spoke about a drug war based on:

"Drug selling was taken out of the hands of the Black community. The Muslim community has the upper hand in terms of the drug trade and this has caused problems" (P7).

Many young people commented on the South Asian young people making their money through drug selling whilst others made comments about the drug market. There was a lot of disparate information given. "Muslim kids sell the stuff but they don't take it" (SAYP2) and "They all at it ... smoking the stuff" (SAYP10).

One of the most interesting comments heard during participant observation in one of the youth centres was from a young man who commented on his cousin being arrested for selling drugs but then went on to say "They didn't know his uncle was the Imam. My coz he was out in no time never heard no more 'bout it" (SAYP9). Another comment at a different time by another young person was "yeh me and my mates... we got into trouble and got arrested.... but money talks don't it...it all got sorted" (SAYP5). It was comments like this heard in youth centres that demonstrated why the African Caribbean young people might be led to believe that they were victimised by the police and the South Asian community could "get away with murder" (ACYP18).

There were many discussions in the youth centres about drugs primarily about who's doing what. This was not only an issue for young people and for those practitioners who had to address the increased drug use amongst young people but those that are responsible for enforcement. Many of the respondents believed that there was a link between the two groups and the drugs issue because the South Asian community had pushed the African Caribbean dealers

out of the market by selling drugs traditionally sold by them and by moving onto their territorial grounds and undercutting them. Through this three pronged approach they had been able to maintain the market since that time. The frustration seemed to be located in the situations where the African Caribbean community had to purchase drugs from the South Asian drug dealers to maintain not only their personal use but for those dealing within their own community.

It would appear from the data gathered in the research that the history of drug selling in the town has an indirect link with some of the violence that takes place. This is another example to many African Caribbean young people of the South Asian community "trying to take everything away from them" (ACYP4)

Several young people commented on the fact that now that the Asians have so much they have to make sure no one takes it away from them. This comment soon appeared as a thread that ran through a number of discussions although in many cases termed differently. The point being made was about having to defend what they had. "Asians have accumulated all these things they needed to defend their territory so that it did not get taken away" (CM14) One young person said that the area had been designed as a "no go area" saying that "word on the ground is that you don't go there if you know what's good for you" (ACYP9). Another said "they (meaning the South Asian) believe that the some parts of Luton belong to them ... they police it so we can't come in with out being seen" (ACYP19).



What was interesting though was that where South Asian males had experiences of policing it was often related to drugs which came up a number of times in the discussion that young people were having. "The police are always in our area at night and early morning. They watching the ones they know that are dealers" (SAYP8). Another saying "The police don't bother us so much but they do a lot of drugs raids in our area" (SAYP15). The data had comments about drug use in the town from a variety of respondents. The analysis was interesting as it evidenced another possible reason youth violence may occur between some African Caribbean and South Asians young people and could be linked to drug territories and drug markets.

For many African Caribbean young people it was if some of the South Asian young men believed that they had to keep people out of the area as it was theirs. They saw this as their turf and that the South Asian community had been given some license to "defending their territory from others" (ACYP16) meaning anyone from outside of the South Asian community.

### **Defending the territory**

One community member echoed the sentiments of some others who had responded to the research. She said "The South Asian community had developed the area (Bury Park) so that it is exclusive to them. It has their own shops, banks, their mosques and all the council services come out to them....some people don't even leave the area ... they don't know what Luton even looks like outside of their few streets" (CM9). The young people commented that some areas had been set up to keep anyone but Asians out.

"No one except Asians goes to their areas" (ACYP19). A number of young people commented that they would not go into the area at night "it's like they have CCTV everywhere. As soon as you arrive they know" (ACYP3). Usually if they took the risk of going into the area at night a fight would be the end result. One young person "sometimes we go down in the day just to get them mad ... they don't touch us in the day ... too many people around...it's good fun... you should see their faces when we walk down the road" (ACYP12).

Another respondent spoke about the police saying that "when there's trouble in the area it's always us that the police arrest saying we shouldn't be there and when it's in our area it's still our fault because the Muslims they tell the police... we come to see our family and they started on us and the police believe them" (ACYP17).

In the youth centre debates it was very clear that the South Asian young people spoke about Bury Park as being an important part of their life. It was the hub of all activity but also where they linked up with friends and family. Whilst there is no evidence of any South Asian young people or community members making comments about trying to keep the African Caribbean community out of the area there were three discussions that took place amongst young people where one said to a friend "we got another polish family moved into the empty house next to us and the council is putting them all in Bury Park" (SAYP14). On another occasion a young person commented on the house his dad was renting saying that the council was paying his dad rent for his house to put people currently on the housing waiting list. "All our houses have been rented to the

Polish; they all over the place" (SAYP3) and the final one was when the Polish bakery opened in the area and a young person said "Don't know what they was cooking but it stinks" (SAYP7) and there was a lot of shaking of heads in agreement.

While there was no explicit mention by the South Asian community of defending any territory the African Caribbean young people were adamant that they owned the place and their perception was that they couldn't go there without some confrontation taking place. Recorded incidents are located at the two schools in the area, the community centre and the park area not necessarily in the places that the young people named.

Reflecting on the outcome of this question in relation to the data gathered this questioned proved to be really useful in identifying the factors that had contributed to the conflict. These factors were also ones that would affect young people in terms of their personal and social identity. This question gained the researcher a lot of information that was then able to be used to do analysis related to identity issues. This is presented in the next chapter.

### **6.3 Where have all the Girls Gone?**

Inter racial conflict in all of the incidents highlighted have involved males however the research was interested in finding out where the young women were when these incidents were taking place and what if any role they had prior to the events, during or after.

Throughout the research “girls” were spoken about many times in terms of being “protected”. They were often used by young men on both sides to justify actions. Some of this was explored when seeking to understand the roles that young women played in the conflict. There were a number of opportunities in the research to talk to young women about the conflict that the two groups of young men in question were often embroiled in. They made a number of interesting comments:

“Girls have issues, but they deal with them in different way, me and this girl had a problem at school, me and my mates, we just made her life hell. We followed her everywhere, made her scared” (ACYP23).

Another said that:

“there are only a few Muslim girls in my school; they go to the girls school, or the Islamic school. Don’t have no problems with them, they really quiet, they don’t get involved” (ACYP25).

A number of the African Caribbean young people talked about the girls being there to support them as in “my sister and her friends they watch the school fights; they start shouting out to get the Paki’..., they sometimes make it worse” (ACYP14). This was borne out in other comments that the observers to the fights; many of whom were girls would be in the background but they antagonised the situation by calling out names and stirring the boys on. One young person said “We come to watch the fights; it’s always good to see a fight especially when we have the upper hand and we are getting the Asians” (ACYP3).

The few young women in the study who were from an Asian background commented that they did not get involved in the conflict saying “I know that

many boys in my community are having fights with the Black boys; I don't get involved and my friends don't" (SAYP18). She went on to say that most of the Muslim girls went to the girls school and as such they were unaware of the problems that the groups were having. They only knew about some of the issues from conversations in "their families; usually between the brothers and their fathers".

The African Caribbean young women seemed to be far more concerned about the episodes of inter racial conflict and would usually be party to the school based incidents or the ones that happened outside school. The boys had spoken of other incidents and it appeared that for those that took place outside of these settings or through chance meetings the young women were usually not involved; however it was said several times that when the information came out the girls were the transmitters of information. "The girls they always texting about what's happening, who's doing what and who's getting who" (ACYP15). "You don't need to say anything the girls them; they tell everyone what's going on and they get it wrong sometimes ... usually when they wasn't there" (ACYP9). This comment was particularly of importance because it also appeared that the young women were not only transmitters of information but they were also carriers of untruths. The information being passed became either distorted as it got passed about or exaggerated to make out that the African Caribbean community had done things that had not necessarily happened.

"I got a real beating from some Asians 'cause the girls told everyone that I beat up about 6 of the Asian boys and had put one in hospital and that no one should mess with me" (ACYP9)

The actual truth was that he was one of three who had a verbal altercation and as such pushed one of the boys out of the way; he lost his footing and fell pulling the ligament in his leg. Information about the incident travelled around the South Asian groups who went out looking for him and as he said, "gave me a good going over" (ACYP9)

The young women spoke about incidents of bullying or fighting amongst themselves and in many cases "these don't even start off as racial incidents; they just not getting on with each other. In the end though it all comes down to race and everyone takes sides and we all stick with our own kind" (WYP4). One of the young women said when we start fighting against the other groups we "fight hard.... its like we have something to prove. If we fighting another one of us we just give them a pasting and call it a day but fighting with the others can go on for days" (ACYP26). Another said that "the girls fight more now than they used to; they are as hard as the boys" (ACYP3). This was commented on several times with many of the boys saying that they thought the "girls were getting into more fights all the time" (ACYP11). Another one of the respondents said "some of the girls fight better than us but they don't fight with us when we are beating the Asians; they know they can't" (ACYP5).

A number of boys in the research said that the girls don't get involved in the street fighting but they do a lot of damage behind the scenes. "When things are going to happen the girls text each other; usually to say that there's going to be a fight after school and then they all come down" (ACYP18). Another commented saying "the girls are always watching; they don't get involved but they come and watch" (ACYP21).

The data also produced some information on some elements of the conflict amongst the groups stemming from young men fighting over young women. In earlier analysis African Caribbean males commented that the South Asian community were trying to take everything away from them and this had included them looking for girls. A number of South Asian young men commented on the African Caribbean young men dating South Asian girls. "They don't understand our culture ... girls have responsibilities to do what their parents decide for them" (SAYP7). "The Blacks try to make the Muslim girls go out with them but it's wrong and they know it...they just do it to get us mad" (SAYP17).

One young man from the African Caribbean community said "the Asians think it's ok to go out with Black and White girls but you can't even look at their girls" (ACYP3). My friend was going out with an Asian girl and her brothers came looking for him when they found out. They threatened him with all sorts; told him to stay away" (ACYP5). Another young person commented on recent incidents on conflict saying that if we "touch their women they kick the hell out of us but we are supposed to be happy if they go out with the black girls" (ACYP16). He went on to say that on one hand the girls support the conflict that exists between the African Caribbean's and the Asians but on another they instigate it because they "go an be with them" (meaning the Asian young men).

There was criticism from the same group of African Caribbean young men talking about territorial issues where they spoke about being unable to go into their areas and not looking at any of their girls. They spoke about "hiding their

girls away from them ... they think we might steal them away" (ACYP2). Another young person criticised the South Asian young men saying that "They come into the areas where Whites and Blacks live; they pick fights" (ACYP2). One young person said that the Asian boys were "always cruising around the area in their cars; they looking for girls" (ACYP4). He went on to say:

"The Asian boys they want to have the White girls and the Black girls. They come to get them. If any of us so much as look at one of their sisters we in trouble. We get beaten up. You can have a best friend who's Asian but don't look at his sister. You do... this big war starts. They want to be accepted but they don't want to open up their arms... so we end up fighting. They have set up themselves to stop anyone wanting to come onto their territory but they want to come onto ours and take what we have".

My reflection on the outcome of this question is that it proved to a good quality question gaining information about young women. It would appear from the data that the role of young women is an interesting one and can again play a part in the ensuing conflict between these groups. Relationships between the young men and the young women can be strengthened or weakened dependant on the position they take. This and the preceding areas of conflict identified will have an impact on how the young men view themselves and the position they take in society. The data presented a number of areas that have an influence on the conflict that exists; importantly however is how that conflict may have an influence on the roles and positions that young people take in establishing who they are. We have already seen how important identification of self is for young people. If this identification is fractured there may be a possibility that conflict with others is allowed to exist within young people and if unresolved remain part of who they are.



#### **6.4 The influence of the conflict on the construction of identity**

In an attempt to explore questions of conflict and identity two of the three focus groups held (one at each youth centre) were primarily focussed on gaining an insight into young people's thoughts about this. At the Eastleigh youth centre 12 young people took part in the workshop of which 8 were African Caribbean males, 2 were African young women and 2 were White Males. At the Westleigh youth centre 11 young people took part in the workshop of which 10 being South Asian male and 1 White male. At both locations young people were asked the same questions about how was identity determined and how they would describe their own identity. This included what influenced their identity and if identity could be threatened by others and if so what the outcome of this was.

Young people believed that identity could be determined by number of things some saying that it was "How you are recognised by other people; what they see when they look at you" (SAYP3). Another commented that "people make decisions about you based on what they see... like I am Black and even before they get to know me they have already decided what I am going to be like" (ACYP4). Identity is about "who you are and what you become" (ACYP9). Others thought that the important part of an identity was the way you "behaved; the way that you come across to others" (ACYP1). A number of young people talked about Nationality and what this meant to them. Being British was important for young people but they also wanted to be recognised as being "Black British" or "British Pakistani". Black young people were expressive about being Black first and British second. They were proud of being Black and even though they felt

that they were "treated badly by most people" (ACYP6) they were proud to be Black. A number of them wanted to be recognised as African Caribbean and did not like the term Black. "We are all Black but we are not all African Caribbean" (ACYP8). White young people in the Eastleigh Youth centre said that they were "British and told people where they were from and who they were. We don't have to explain ourselves as much as these guys" (WYP2). Prompted by the youth worker to say what it is to be British one of them said "It means we were born here ... we are White... I really don't know" she said but "we don't think about it as much as these do (referring to the South Asian young people in the centre) we are just British" (WYP1).

The South Asian young people made a point of classifying themselves as Pakistani or Bengali. What became clear in the workshop was that "although we are all called Asian by the rest of the people between us we know who is Pakistani and who is Bengali; it's very important to us" (SAYP5). Identification amongst the South Asian group was important as their own internal traditions differed. The young people talked about the separation that existed amongst these two South Asian groups. In Luton there are about 6 mosques; Pakistani Muslims only go to certain ones and the Bengali Muslims to the others. "We don't go to the same ones; our families do not mix" (SAYP7). One of the young people said "if you look at the area, the Bengalis all live in the bit by the park and all the Pakistani's live by the community centre. People think we all get on but we don't; there are a lot of problems between us" (SAYP2).

One of the areas that came to light when talking to the young people was that the African Caribbean young people did not recognise any difference between those young people who were Pakistani or Bengali. They were all "Asians" (ACY7). They used the word Asian very loosely to identify anyone that fell in that group and had very little desire to find out if there were any differences between those that were from a Pakistani heritage and those from a Bangladesh.

Interesting enough the South Asian young people also demonstrated the same thinking. As far as they could see the young people were just "Black" (SAYP15). They had very little understanding about the make up of the Caribbean; the different islands or the different cultures and influences.

Pakistani and Bengali young people on the other hand were very clear about where they were from and how they differed from each other. They would refer to young people within their own cultural group as Bengali or Pakistani but would revert to Black when speaking about African Caribbean young people. The other interesting note made was that whilst the young people spoke about internal issues amongst the Pakistanis and the Bengalis when other cultural or religious groups were introduced into the conversation they referred to themselves as Muslims bringing together some allegiance ... becoming allies against difference.

Other young people said that identity was determined by how you dressed and what you wore. "People think all Muslim women wear hijab's and cover their faces; they don't really understand and they just make assumptions" (SAYP8).

"On Friday's I wear my traditional dress. I don't really like it but I have to wear it for mosque. It tells people I am Muslim" (SAYP2).

Dress was important for many young people in the Eastleigh youth centre. "My clothes are important to me; they say a lot about me" (ACYP5). "We buy our clothes in the Hip Hop Shop... they say something about who I am and what I like" (ACYP2). Another said "Others see my clothes and make a connection with me; it tell us we all like the same things" (ACYP1). One respondent spoke about the "Asian boys come to the store to buy things ... we ask them what they doing there ... some of them go to London and buy our stuff" (ACYP6). Another said "them Asians even trying to steal our clothes ... we can't have nothing for ourselves ... we don't wear their clothes ... what they want ours for" (ACYP23).

The issue of clothing and dress was brought up by a number of African Caribbean young people. Music was also an area where the African Caribbean young people were angry about. "They always try to cover our music... what..... they don't have none of their own... they cover it then play it in their cars and clubs, its like... see what we do with your music .. we taking that too" (ACYP6).

South Asian males on the other hand did not appear to be threatened by materialistic things like dress and clothing. They defined themselves in terms religion and culture. Many South Asian males discussing who they are would say that they are "Muslim first then Bengali... or Pakistani; religion is very important. Being Muslim is what we are about; it's our life (SAYP3). In the workshop Muslim males identified themselves first as Muslim then male and then Bangladeshi or

Pakistani and then everything else. A number of young people identified with the school they went to. This seemed to be more of an issue for the South Asian young people. A number of them went to the mixed High school in the area but others went to the Boys only school. Muslim families "choose which school you go to based on which families are there. They don't want you to mix with some of the other families. It's a bit like the Mosque thing" (SAYP4).

Many of the young people were proud to live in the town but mentioned that sometimes the town gets a bad name especially when it is highlighted in the media. While this was not an area explored in depth during the research the image of the town was brought up a number of times particularly in terms of what it is to live in a town where the media is always keen to portray it as a negative place to be. Media can be influential in identity formation and young people will take messages from what they see and hear. Brown et al, (1994) say that:

"individuals actively and creatively sample available cultural symbols, myths, and rituals as they produce their identities. For teens, the mass media are central to this process because they are a convenient source of cultural options".

They go on to say that constructing an identity in our current 'media-saturated world' is not easy and often the expectations of 'living up to' what society presents them with can add additional pressure that:

"a teenager does not experience the angst of constructing a self in a void but rather in the middle of a world of societal expectations and pressures that require public performances to "keep face" and, in some instances, to maintain physical and emotional safety.

In general young people thought it was an "ok place to live" (SAYP2;7;10 and 17 and ACYP2;5;6 and 9). Young people talked about different ways in which people

held strong associations with their areas and how they could tell if people were not from their area based on simple things like the trainers that are worn. A postcode badge appeared to be very common; young people could easily distinguish between the different areas of the town. There was a strong feeling of tensions between areas and young people not feeling safe about going to a area different to their own. This was an issue that most young people in the session agreed upon and were very familiar with.

In the data Muslim young men highlighted the way that others viewed them and believed that unfair stereotypes had been placed on them due to world events and media coverage. "I feel safe in my area but when I go anywhere else people look at me. I know what they are thinking. Just because some Muslims are terrorists they think every Muslim is" (SAYP5). This sentiment was echoed by a number of other respondents with several of them stating that in the last year at least they had remained in the confines of their area where people did not make "judgements about them" (SAYP16).

African Caribbean young people in the main listed Family, Friends and Traditions as their top three when it came to what influenced identity. The South Asian young people in the main put Religion then Family in the first two and then a combination of Values, Traditions and Customs as the third.

A number of young people talked about the changes that took place in what they believed as they had become older. "For a long time I just went along with what my family traditions were. I have started to look at some things differently; my

mum is not happy that I have friends who are Bengali or that I hang out with some of the guys from my school in the evening" (SAYP4). Conflict within the family was a feature for a number of the discussions. In many South Asian young people just wanted to get involved in activities after school, hang out with friends or stay out in the evenings. Many felt that their parents "were trying to control me" (SAYP6). Whilst African Caribbean young people appeared to have much more freedom they felt that they were often criticised for their dress codes and music they had adopted. Parents felt "out of control" (ACYP3). In both centres young people talked about changing attitudes to those that they had been brought up with. In embracing new opportunities and making new friends they could easily become embroiled in family conflicts. "My parents see the worst in anything that does not meet their traditions; they always have a reason for why it is wrong and there is usually no discussion" (SAYP7).

Young people talked about the conflict that they encountered with their families in their teenage years; usually starting after the commencement of High School. "On one hand parents want us to grow up and stop being children but when we start to find other interests that don't suit them they try to make us into children again" (ACYP2). It seems like you spend a lot of your teenage years arguing with your parents. It's like there is this big struggle to see who has more control" (ACYP4).

A practitioner working with young African Caribbean men said:

"It is an unfortunate fact that many Caribbean young people come from broken families and disadvantaged backgrounds and Black young men, in particular, have a lack of strong role models in their community and in schools. Therefore ideas of belonging and identity are sometimes very difficult to find for young Caribbean men - who then attribute their 'sense of self' to things they can relate to - be it

images in the media, a particular way of dressing, or a certain street slang" (P9).

In the youth club centres young people talked about clothing and music often. These were very familiar things to them and each had types of music and clothing that identified them both as an individual and as a member of a specific racial group. South Asian young men did not appear to demonstrate the same kind of anger that young African Caribbean young men did if the other group dressed like them or played their "type" of music.

One of the community members said:

"I have encountered many Caribbean young men who feel that conflict, from their perspective, begins when South Asian young men begin to encroach on the identities that they have created for themselves. For example, South Asians dressing in a similar way, or buying clothing from 'Black' or 'Urban' brand labels, using the street slang that Black young men have claimed as their own, and sometimes simply hanging out in an area that Black young people use as theirs can be highly offensive to Black young men because their concept of security and who they are is threatened. Daft as it may be to some, this is a serious issue for young people whose identity is very important to them, especially when it is one that they have formed and created themselves" (CM11).

The focus group extracted many views on what the young people thought about identity. It also gave them an opportunity to discuss some of the threats that exist that can have an impact. What came out of the discussions confirmed much of the academic thoughts presented in the literature review about identity formation. Young people talked of both personal and social identity as identified by Brewer (2001) in terms of identity that differs from their parents and trying to find their own sense of belonging. This is re-iterated by Erikson's (1968) idea of identity crisis and particularly in terms of the formation of identity in BME young people and Phinney's (1996) concept of ethnic behaviours was evident. By recognising



some of these in the young people who were part of the research it is possible to make a link to the impact that this has and thereby make some suggestion that this can initiate or reinforce some of the conflict that exists between the different groups.

My reflections of this question is that it again produced a lot of information related to identity that could be cross referenced with other issues raised and could be analysed in terms of how this affects inter racial conflict. I was pleased with the information given as it helped to develop my thinking about identity and inter racial conflict. I am however conscious that asking about identity as part of the question could be seen as a leading question and the researcher could be criticised for this. I am confident however that whilst the initial aim was to gain data related to young peoples struggles in terms of managing personal issues that not asking them to focus on identity as an example might have led the data to consist of a range of things that may or may not have been useful but very little about their association to identity formation. Although there is an appreciation that this question would lend itself to respondents giving answers around identity this was not deceitful as the researcher has made it explicit from the outset that this study was about identity and interracial conflict. This question was aimed at focusing the respondents on the thesis objectives and as such the researcher feels justified in asking the question.

## **6.5 The Impact on Youth Crime and Anti Social Behaviour**

As discussed previously the local Youth Offending Service (YOS) has a local youth justice plan which outlines how it is going to reduce youth offending in the area. Incidents of youth crime are affected by young people involved in street based violence and anti social behaviour and as such there is a need to target areas of youth crime to meet the youth justice plans.

As this area is recognised to be one of concern based on the number of professionals highlighting it there would be some expectation that the area of work would gain some specific support. Additionally the local race plan focuses on those entering the youth offending service rather than those that are the subject of preventative work. This narrow view does not consider that increased numbers of inter racial violence may result in arrests and prosecutions and ultimately have an effect on the local plans.

In the data those being asked what they believed might be an implication for youth offending in the town said very little and even the Head of Service said "we are aware that this area of youth conflict is increasing and as such we need to ensure that more preventative work is undertaken so that we can encourage these groups to get on better with each other" (SH2). This answer offered no recognition of what he might do as a result of this awareness and how it might affect his service. Another said we are "managing the issues of inter racial conflict in the town very well; we recognise that this has been an issue and have identified specific actions as part of our community safety strategy to

tackle this" (SH4). Needless to say there was no evidence of this target in the strategy. A Head of Service for the police said "We take all issues of youth violence seriously and have deployed a lot of resources into this area of work to ensure that we bring perpetrators to justice" (CO3).

Many of the youth workers taking part in the research were working directly with young people in centres where this conflict had an impact on the work they were doing. Others were involved in street based and detached work and regularly came across young people. For most of them conflict amongst these specific groups was a difficulty as they invested many hours of their time dealing with the issues that the young people had experienced. "It seems that all I am doing is policing young people; sorting out problems and breaking up fights...I just want to do youth work projects where the young people get involved and complete a piece of work and have fun....its not a lot to ask" (YW6).

Another youth worker interviewed also expressed frustrations at the ongoing conflict amongst these groups. Working in an African Caribbean majority attended youth centre he spent a lot of time being used as a "sounding board" for the young people. As the young people had developed a positive relationship with him over some time they saw him as an advocate. He also found that they vented their frustrations about the way they were treated when it all went wrong. "I can't tell you how many times I have to go to the police station to advocate for a young person. I shouldn't be doing this but the police are always trying to lock the Black boys up" (YW3). Another said that the young people had grown to respect him and they would openly plan "their

moves" in ear shot. He spent a considerable amount of time trying to divert them away from going out looking for the "Asian boys" because they had a "score to settle" (YW1). He raised concerns about being compromised by the information he was often party to.

Young people were more vocal about the impact that the ongoing conflict between the two groups was having. The African Caribbean young people were critical of the police consistently for their approach in dealing with them. "It's always us never the Asians...we fight... the police come... no questions asked and we are arrested" (ACYP5). This ongoing frustration was repeated again and again throughout the period of the study and almost every African Caribbean young person in the study talked about the heavy handed approach that the police took when dealing with them; usually unjustified that often led to arrests. The same young people criticised the police and other services for showing "favouritism". Many talked about the "Asians are untouchable" (ACYP3;6;12;17;23 and 26) and "they can kill and get away with it" (ACYP22), along with "they got their people looking for them" (ACYP1 and 23).

On the other side the South Asian young people often made comments about the African Caribbean groups having "a chip on their shoulder" (SAYP8;12 and 17) and that they had "started it so they got what was coming to them" (SAYP13 and 18) "they need to arrest them all for what they did" (SAYP2). This comment was made in reference to the incident that had resulted in the death of a South Asian male in previous years.

Many practitioners commented on the increased incidence of weapon carrying and as such the implications this had for not only other young people but the general public. As more of the research group began to carry weapons as a means of protection; increased arrests were being made and increased numbers of stop and search were being undertaken and ultimately more young people were entering the youth justice system.

Data from the police show that increased numbers of weapons were being removed from young people on the streets. There is no analysis of the ethnicity of those charged with carrying weapons and as such no evidence could be linked to those involved in inter racial violence in the town being those who were carrying weapons.

Carrying weapons and the use of guns came up several times in the data when asked to comment on implications for youth justice. What appeared to come through in the data was the concern that many young people would enter the youth justice system for carrying weapons; not necessarily for getting into conflict situations with other cultural groups. Comments like this were made by several members of the Black community. "The police are targeting our young people; they stop them on the street all the time trying to catch them with weapons so they can lock them up" (CM6).

These comments are not supported when one looks at the Police data on stop and search for the town. For the data available the incidents of stop and search do not show that any racial or cultural group of young people are excessively

stopped and searched over another. The data is representative of the youth population however it is recognised that assumption and reality are generally disproportionate.

Again as with stop and search there is a perception that there is more knife carrying going on than there actually is particularly in terms of numbers of young people carrying weapons as identified by Lemos and Craine (2004). A number of Community members commented on the growing incidence of violence amongst the Black community referring to Black on Black violence or Intra racial conflict.

The recent use of guns in the violence associated with this group was raised as a concern some believing that this could prove to be more "problematic than the ongoing conflict between the South Asian and African Caribbean young people" (CM3). Another community member said this "was an issue that I am becoming increasingly concerned about. I expect this will continue for a long time in the future ... there is no easy answer" (CM5). Another community member said, "we have lots of issues of conflict amongst young people and its always going to be a problem. If it's not amongst the blacks, it's them and the Asians and if it wasn't between those two groups it would be others" (CM8).

On reflection this question provided information about the consequences of being involved in inter racial conflict and whilst it may not have gained huge amounts of pertinent data the information collated can be cross referenced with other information to consider how this affects personal and social identity. The

way that young people are policed can affect their identity and this is used as discussion in the data analysis section.

## **6.6 Creating Cohesion**

A range of partners across the statutory, voluntary and business sector in the town have been consulted on the development of the local Community Cohesion Strategy. Led by the council an Action Plan has been produced that outlines how it intends with its partners to invest time and effort in trying to bring communities together. Many have been critical of the Strategy and others cynical of how it will attempt to deal with some of the conflicts in the town. In relation to the area that this thesis is looking at (P5) commented that:

"You know that the Black Community cannot live with the Muslim community. As soon as they started to move into "their" area the Black's started to move out. They didn't want to be associated with each other".

One of the council's Housing Managers said that it was very difficult to expect these two groups to get along when it was very clear that they had been "thrown together into an area of high poverty and economic difficulties and in a search to retain some uniqueness they had resorted to self imposed segregation" (P4). She went on to say:

"Housing segregation in the town has had a knock on effect for many practices in the town. If you think about Luton, there has always been a policy of housing those new to the town there, so the Black and the Asians were housed there. It is one of the poorest areas of the town and the housing stock is the probably the ones that are least looked after".

She later went on to discuss her views on how housing policies have been instrumental in enabling the South Asian community to “take over the area”.

She said that:

“The increased numbers of Asians being housed in the area, led to many Whites and subsequently Black moving out of the area. Under the “right to buy” policies the South Asian community snapped up the house as they had the financial ability to do this and as such that community although living in one of the poorest areas of the town have been able through this to establish themselves in this area of the town”.

One of the teachers in the area commented about the inability to tackle some of the actions outlined in the community cohesion strategy as the thinking behind it had not embraced the real issues. She spoke about the schools having large numbers of Muslim children. She too believed that the council policies had been at fault for allowing this to happen:

“By co-incidence the Girls High School and the Boys High School happened to be in this area. The Muslim community argued that because of cultural issues they should have priority for these schools and as such it was granted. Young people of other cultural and religions backgrounds were bussed out to other schools so that places could be made available for the growing numbers of children, the impact is that now these two schools along with others that border on the area all have over 90 percent Muslim children” (P4).

She went to say that:

“the implication is that you have primary schools and high schools full of Muslim children who have never had an opportunity to meet anyone from another culture other than their own. Now they want them to get along with everyone else. For goodness sake how can they expect this to happen without looking at some of the policies that have put in place”.

One of the practitioners stated that the Black community believed that the “resources were being distributed unevenly and that the South Asian community were accessing more of this because they had people on the inside



looking out for them" (P4). When challenged further on this, reference was made to the fact that Council Officers and South Asian Councillors were colluding to make sure that the South Asian community were benefiting from the positions in the council. "Seems like if you support the Asian Councillors and get them what they want you can get on in the council...I know lots of people who have been promoted here in the council because they are looking out for the Asian community" (P7).

The allocation of resources was a topic that was raised continuously by respondents. In the main the community members, other than those from South Asian background believed that "the Asians ... they got everything in this town" (CM7;11 and 13). They believed that allocation of council resources was "already decided by those at the council and not even worth applying for or they might give you a few hundred to keep you quiet" (CM1). Nearly all the Black Community members and the Black Youth workers echoed this dissatisfaction in terms of how their community was resourced.

Many South Asian respondents felt that they were "overlooked when money was given out" (CM3) and that not enough was done to support them. Those respondents from the South Asian community who spoke about resources allocation did not mention about the African Caribbean community receiving more than them but many comments were made about them always "complaining (P1 and CM2) or arguing (YW3) or feeling as if they are hard done by (CM1 and CM3) and not supported (P4).

Young people in the main did not talk about community cohesion as understood by practitioners but they would often make reference to having opportunities to get to know each other but it seemed as if this did not happen they were not unduly concerned. The African Caribbean young people talked about allocation of resources and many believed that the "government was always throwing money at them Muslims" (ACYP24). These and similar comments were made in response to the increasing amount of funding being directed at Muslim communities by the government. One such strand is the Preventing Violent Extremist (PVE) Funding. In July 2007 the government provided £370 million of funding over three years in 70 priority local areas to "support local authorities and community groups in improving the capacity of local communities to resist violent extremism" (Prevent Strategy, 2007). In Luton as in many areas receiving the funding it has been targeted at the Muslim community.

One young person expressed support for PVE funding saying "well you got to do something... they all terrorists...aint they?" (ACYP20). Many others said that they were offended that this money was being directed at them. "It's like they (the government) think we are all going to blow up the place" (SAYP19) ... we ain't all gonna be terrorists...what they think we can't think for ourselves" (SAYP11).

In terms of bringing communities together and looking at building cohesive communities a number of people commented on the ill thought out strategy around this funding. "If anything it has done more to damage relationships between the South Asian community and the African Caribbean community than

any other problems we have had in the past" (P4) and "This funding and the way that it has been profiled nationally has created a lot of tension and we are feeling the impact of this from the community groups" (SM8). This tension continues to fuel the ongoing violence amongst the town's most prominent groups. The African Caribbean community sees again that they are being marginalised by the town and that "everything is given to the Asians" (CM7).

On reflection the researcher is willing to accept that this was an idyllic question based on the fact that solving some of the issues related to inter racial conflict might help the two communities in question to get on with each other. During the data gathering period of this investigation the researcher was heavily involved with the council and its partners on developing a community cohesion action plan and was influenced into relating the thesis subject area with some of the discussions that were emerging from the those within the community cohesion meetings. Even so the information that is collated from asking this question has relevance to issues of identity particularly around social space, unfair treatment in terms of funding and feelings of being marginalised.

## **6.7 Resolving the Conflict**

The data analysis for information related to resolving the conflict wasn't as forthcoming as some of the other questions. Many respondents said they were not sure what we need to do about the conflict that existed between the groups. However a number put forward suggestions that work with the two

groups needed to take place to look at where the conflict initiated from and to undertake some conflict resolution work.

A number of practitioners believed that “early work in schools was absolutely necessary to help young people learn about different people and cultures” (P3). Others said that young people “needed opportunities to spend more time with people from other backgrounds” (P7). A number of practitioners also put forward suggestions of initiatives they had been involved in or heard about and suggested that these could be looked at in order to tackle some of the youth conflict in the own. However whilst these might be important the data shows that these tensions are a bit deeper than just knowing about each other’s cultures, they are reinforced by a range of factors and getting to know about each other is a very simplistic solution.

Many felt that this was an ongoing issue that would remain with the town. That the major disturbances were focussed on and minimised but the groups generally were left alone to solve their problems. The Chief Officers and Heads of Service who offered suggestions believed that there was a need to re-visit the current “plans located in schools and county settings to see where we can develop a more strategic view to tackle youth violence” (SH4) or we have a “very good community cohesion strategy in place and we need to look at the actions required to implement this” (SH6).

Generally those with corporate responsibilities talked about strategy whilst practitioners offered initiatives that could be tried with young people and some

visionary people thought we should talk to the young people and involve them in the resolutions.

As the focus of this research was ultimately to enable young people to put forward the suggestions and ideas for managing inter racial conflict in the town they were given an opportunity to do this in the youth centre through an interactive event. The youth workers managed a few sessions to help them explore some of the issues they had raised and to think about what kinds of interventions practitioners could adopt to address the issues and where possible bring the young people together.

The young people made a number of suggestions which were consistent with what the youth workers suggested and these included:-

- Using Music as this was an effective medium for attracting young people and getting across positive messages.
- Bring in influential people to talk to young people; these could be older young people who could act as role models.
- Finance youth centres so they can run activity based workshops and enable young people to produce DVD's etc. around issues like gun crime.
- Give young people opportunities to use the music studio so they can make their own records and then play them at their own planned events.
- More work on building young people's self esteem so that they are confident with who they are and less likely to get into conflict situations.

- More of the workshops that were delivered in the session to look at identity, culture and issues around youth conflict.
- Workshops for parents that make them realise that they are part of the problems.
- Let young people choose their own community leaders and to tell you whether they approve of the ones you have.
- Organise events that bring people from different cultures together
- More work in schools.
- Talk about the issues to young people and ask them what they think should happen.

Although some positive suggestions were made many of these needed advocates and the young people saw the role of their youth workers as instrumental in this. One community member said:

"I'm not sure of the best way to deal with these issues. I do honestly feel that unfortunately no matter what is done with these young people there is always going to be this problem. the ease and availability of weapons adds to it, as well as religion, race and culture... and young peoples misunderstanding of each other and ignorance to learn about each other adds to it all" (CM13).

One of the practitioners said:

"unfortunately if you take a group of young people to do some work with them; the work gets undone once they get back to the bigger group that they hang with. It also gets undone in the home as people obviously have different values and thoughts about others and a parents or siblings values and views are far more powerful and influential than a youth workers" (P2).

A South Asian young person said:

"I think that a majority of the conflict doesn't necessarily start as Black versus Asian but individual versus individual and these spread and can turn or look like it is race versus race. I have seen that people of the same race will back their friends, no matter what

started it and some won't even care what started it; just that their friend is in trouble" (SAYP7).

The suggestions put forward particularly by the young people for developing work which may reduce the inter racial conflict being experienced by African Caribbean and South Asian groups were in the main very positive. Many of these would be useful ideas for engaging a range of young people and as such are worth considering as project initiatives; but they need to form a far more holistic approach to tackling youth violence amongst BME groups. There is a real possibility that the current package of work will be repackaged and delivered in another disguise without attempting to take on board the history of the groups and the wider social and political issues that have an integral part to play in this particular area of youth violence.

Ultimately the thesis wants to make recommendations for practice in terms of addressing issues of inter racial conflict but also about supporting young people in their personal and social development so that they are able to manage and be diverted away from conflict situations. The question helped to draw out some positive suggestions, particularly from young people who often feel that they are not consulted on solutions to issues and have things done to them rather than with them.

In the next section I discuss these findings in relation to identity and inter racial conflict and provide some analysis for making recommendations for practice.

## **Chapter 7.                    RELATING THE FINDINGS TO INTER RACIAL CONFLICT and IDENTITY FORMATION**

The data gathered has enabled considerations to be made as to where some of the issues related to inter racial conflict have derived from in the area being studied and to consider if identity can be linked to this. Whilst the researcher accepts that not all the questions were as relevant to the study as had been anticipated the information collated demonstrates that there is not only limited literature around the topic of inter racial conflict in the UK but also limitations in terms of how practitioners understand the issue.

If we then return to the question that the thesis aims to answer which is about the role of identity in inter racial conflict for BME young people the data gathered in the earlier chapter can be matched against the themes that have emerged. By doing this we can then consider how these may affect identity and their impact on the emergence of inter racial conflict if any. In light of this information we might then discuss how it may be resolved or ameliorated.

### **7.1      Historical Origins and family Influence on Young People**

Through the stories of the older members of the community; those that have been referred to as culture carriers in both the African Caribbean community and the South Asian community, the question was to determine whether the experiences and beliefs of the older generation could be considered as contributory factors to some of the conflict and violence that occurred between the young people of those racial groups.



In analysing the data gathered numerous references were collected that demonstrated how the personal experiences of the first generation African Caribbean and South Asian elders in Luton remained with them. The positive experiences enabled them to engage with others from different groups as well as service providers but much of this was eroded due to negative experiences and assumptions which were more often than not passed around in not only their peer groups but to their children and whether intentionally or not influenced thoughts about others. It was clear that many of those that were spoken to do not actually realise how influential they were with their children and grandchildren when they made negative and derogatory comments.

It could also be fair to say that many of them were also not aware how this influence had played a part in the tensions that had occurred. These tensions also had an intergenerational nature, which makes it harder to address because growing up in a community which sees itself in certain ways and in opposition to another community is likely to have an impact on identity. Kreisberg (1992) talks of Non-Compromising Identities; saying that the nature of the collective identities also affects the difficulty in reaching an accommodation between conflicting groups. He says that:

“members of groups with identities that place a high priority on being honoured and being treated with deference may have difficulty making compromises for or respecting other groups. Furthermore, some self-conceptions relating to ideas of sovereignty, authority, and legitimacy constitute barriers to successful settlement of a conflict”.

There were two areas that emerged in the discussions that are important for this research. One is that there is some recognition of the material elements that take place, an example of this being the displacement of African Caribbean

community by the South Asian community. Many of them can see how this has happened and recognise that whilst the area has developed socially and economically for them; it has had an impact on the African Caribbean families. The second area is linked to this and extends it to the impact of these situations. What became clear was that there was very little understanding of the other communities' perspective or any empathy for what this had caused.

It appears as the data suggests that young people are heavily influenced by the stories that their parents and older community members tell. The African Caribbean families portray their negative feelings about the South Asian community by saying that the South Asian community had moved into "their area... had been given housing....had opened up shops... and had driven them out of the area". Interesting enough it is an almost identical conversation that the South Asian community say about the emerging Polish community in the town.

Throughout the research there is a view that many of the older generation express to each other about the historical underpinning for the conflict but another that they express to the young people to maintain the status quo. Young people are influence by parents in many ways and this is no different with identity; they can instrumental in affecting personal and social identity. Though many adolescents try out different identities; some simply take on their parents' values whilst others take on an identity that conflict with their parents. Before adolescents commit themselves to a particular value system they may explore their parents' values; evaluating and comparing them with other

ideological alternatives so parental ideas and values may play a major role in identity formation (Marcia, 1966). Knafo and Schwartz say "Acceptance of perceived parental values is greater among adolescents who are close to their parents and identify with them" (2003). Marcia (1996) discusses different parent – child relationships and states that those closest to their parents "tend to show unquestioning commitment to the expectations of significant others" and in the relationship with parents says that "their relatively good relations with their parents, identity-achieved adolescents are also likely to accept parental values".

This is particularly important in analysing how the views held by parents can influence how their children think about a range of things and in particular the historical issues discussed in this thesis. Parents can influence their children during the time of identity formation about values related to another cultural or religious group; about perceived threats, expectations and experiences. Young people then carry these into their relationships with others and without questioning may find themselves embroiled in conflict with other racial groups.

## **7.2 Young peoples perceptions of others – Identity Theft**

The data gathered a large amount of information about how many young people from the two groups being studied felt about each other. African Caribbean young people in particular talk about stolen identities, meaning that the South Asian young people were trying to be like them and taking away cultural symbols which they perceived to belong to them. As mentioned

previously this included primarily music, language and clothes. The researcher undertook an analysis to investigate whether for BME young people the perceived threat of what I have called 'identity theft' from another ethnic group serves to consolidate that identity and fuel violent conflicts between the two groups.

In the research antagonistic comments were made by many of the African Caribbean young people about South Asian young men trying to be "like them". Whilst there is a wider societal impact young people have to negotiate themselves around personal threats where they see emulation or admiration as theft of their cultural values. For many of the African Caribbean young men they saw this as negative and not constructive.

Sometimes referred to as 'Cultural appropriation' this embracing of elements of one culture by a different cultural group can imply a negative view towards "acculturation from a minority culture by a dominant culture" (Hasty, 2002). He goes on to say that "these elements once removed from their indigenous cultural contexts can take on meanings that are significantly divergent from, or merely less nuanced than those they originally held". Anthropologists like Schneider (2003) have studied the process of cultural appropriation or cultural borrowing as part of cultural change and contact between different cultures. The term has a negative implication due to perceived or actual superficiality and generally is applied when one culture sees the other as in some way inferior in social, political or economic status to the

other culture; or when there are other issues involved such as a history of ethnic or racial conflict between the two groups.

This fits well with what has come out of the research in terms of antagonistic views related to the theft of culture, without respect to its history and a lack of knowledge of original cultural meanings predominately related to dress and music. It has been argued that such action not only steals from the originating culture but also devalues its people because it reduces the appropriation devoid of any overarching cultural context.

According to Ross (2002) narratives may be defined as “frameworks for action” through which members of particular identity groups “understand the social and political worlds in which they live and explain the conflicts in which they are involved”. In this thesis the narratives are the stories that members of the African Caribbean community and the South Asian community tell about themselves and their relations with the other to create or reinforce a sense of collective identity and shared purpose. Ross (2002) continues by saying:

“Dynamic rather than static, narratives bind individuals together within an active and adaptive community, and change in response to traumatic events and emergent challenges”.

Said and Funk (2004) studying Islamic-Western relations and conflicts talks of an “us versus them” framework that enables a continuous narrative of the story of confrontation to remain that enables historical antagonism from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the present day. They go on to say that in any situation of “intense conflict there is a tendency among disputants to become

trapped inside their own stories of threatened identity, justified fear and unjustifiable suffering”.

This fits well with the research in that young people have identified cultural borrowing as something that threatens their identity; something that is stolen in intergroup relations where self-perception plays an intense role in conditioning the way that the 'other' will be perceived. Although down-to-earth material interests like music and clothes play an important role in any significant intergroup conflict; cultural differences which affects identity powerfully affect the way in which conflict is symbolised and conducted.

### **7.3 Community Leaders and Identity**

The data identified differing perspectives of community leaders. For BME communities being discussed in this study the Imam in the South Asian community and the Church Leaders in the African Caribbean community are considered to be the community leaders. For the older generation and the professional organisations they hold an important role in terms of promoting positive messages when there are community issues and tensions they are often called on for meetings and to call for calm in the community. Young people held a different view of many of these community leaders questioning how they were chosen and by whom along with how they were able to speak on their behalf. They argued that these people were often instigators of conflict and carriers of many of the historical debates.

Burton (1990) says that:

"It should be recognized that political and religious leaders play important roles in shaping identities. Leaders put forward identities that include some people while excluding others. They may expect to benefit from the construction and strengthening of exclusive identities, privileging their own language or religion and gaining power by arousing emotions against other groups and peoples".

Identity formation for those from BME communities has already been discussed however it is important to recognise the role of religion. Schneider (2002) says that:

"Religion has long been and will probably continue to be a contributing factor in some violent conflicts whether in its own right or as a proxy for political battles; in places as widely scattered as Northern Ireland, the Middle East, the Balkans, Sudan, Indonesia and Kashmir".

Religious activists engaged in interfaith dialogue have stressed the fact that religion unfortunately, is often the most visible difference between contesting groups and as a result frequently is blamed for conflicts (Pouligney, 2006).

Smock (2002) says that this can be used or mobilised to promote either conflict or peace building. Young people in the research have ascribed to the fact that faith based community leaders from their perspective do very little in terms of peace building but quite a lot in promoting the conflict. In relation to identity and conflict this point of view is an important one. It has an impact on the the development of young people whereby Phinney (1996) talking of ethnic identity development says that there can be the promotion of negative elements of identity formation rather than the positive elements.

## **7.4 Policing and Identity**

Young people voiced the issues about how they were policed at different points in the study and some of this was supported by comments that came from community members. Identity is formed on personal and social experiences and as such accounts of policing and police behaviour carry important identity related meaning. Opinions of and ideas about the police are drawn into the formation of social identities and as stated by Tyler (2006) "procedural fairness of interactions". He goes on to say that "social identity provides a key causal mechanism in the processes that lead from perceptions of police fairness to trust, legitimacy, cooperation and indeed compliance with the laws the police represent and enforce". Individuals establish connections even in groups with only a fragile basis for group identification (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and they are responsive to signs and symbols that communicate information about their status and position within a group (Tyler, 2006). If people perceive that the way police officers treat them is based not on what they are doing but on their race, gender or age this behaviour will carry negative identity implications.

Tyler's (2006) procedural justice model has developed a robust theoretical framework for understanding "(a) what precisely it is about the behaviour of criminal justice actors and organizations that might influence the social identities of those subject to their authority and (b) the implications arising from the identity shaping aspects of criminal justice processes". Tyler and Huo (2002) say that a key "underlying assumption of the research is that the behaviour of criminal justice agencies has a causal effect on identity".



These research findings are important for this study because young people's social identities as identified by Bradford (2013) shape people's identities in relation to social groups the police represent. But can also shape the social identities of people who come into contact with the police and consequently their readiness to cooperate with them.

The personal and social experiences of many of the young people in this study have been negative and this has a causal effect on their identities. When this is matched against others experience in their own social groupings perceived beliefs are made about them not only a personal level but also on a societal level leading them to believe that they are targeted and victimised by the police and to "identity shaping criminal justice processes" (Tyler 2006).

## **7.5 Drugs and Identity**

Policing and drugs were very much interlinked in the study. As stated previously drug selling in the town could have some links to identity on the basis that there had been historically clear lines about who sold what drug. In recent years this had resulted in conflict due to the South Asian community moving into the perceived African Caribbean drug market. Retail markets for illicit drugs can create intense problems for communities. "They can contribute to a pervasive sense of insecurity and may trigger spirals of social and economic decline especially in deprived areas that already enjoy limited social capital" (Joseph Rowntree, 2005).

In the areas where most of the research cohort live there is high unemployment; the rate being well above the national average and also above the rate for the town as whole. Although employment is available there is a lack off jobs for those who have limited skills or qualifications which is a category that many of the young people in question fall into. Drug dealing has historically for many young men been viewed as an acceptable way to earn money and to be successful when they have assigned themselves to being unable to earn an income through legitimate means.

Historical arrangements enabled the market to be sustained through unwritten protocols and for communities to retain allegiance to their own cultural group. In many cases the selling of drugs was retained within specific families where runners were friends and relatives who would be offered employment. The violation of these agreements has not only threatened the relationship within the two groups but causes individuals anxiety on both a personal and social level. African Caribbean young people have to negotiate a way to get cheaper drugs from the South Asian sellers whilst remaining loyal to their own community, also risk being ostracised by their own communities if found to have done this. These have implications for identity as many young people have had to make personal decisions to adopt a place within another cultural group if they want to sell or buy drugs in order to maintain employment in the drug market.

Policing drug sellers and buyers is based primarily on external information and the two groups have been known to pass information through a third party

about the other. Depending on arrests made; the groups make perceived assumption about who the police are colluding with and this brings the issues of justice into question where young people again believe that this is an attack on them.

## **7.6 Defending the Territory – Social Space and Identity**

The data brings out issues associated with territorial conflict and where the struggle for ownership and control of geographical space and resources were occurring. In re-visiting the literature review there was a strong indication that the struggle over territory and the struggle for resources were often central to inter-racial youth conflict. The data gathered produced many examples of this being a key component in the conflict taking place.

This struggle for resources affects the whole community and can inevitably become something that is crystallised into identity formation. What seems to happen is that being in opposition can then be regarded as a legitimate expression of unfair treatment and so any conflict that results from this is justifiable. The community and its members validate this conflict because it is about fighting to maintain what they have. This serves only to reinforce the view of what is at the root of the conflict.

The struggle for resources initiates many debates about the allocation of funding. Communities across the town have a perception of who gets funding and in most cases they believe that the South Asian community access most of

this or “are given” funding. The data gathered brings out some clear issues about funding approval; making reference to the fact that the South Asian community groups are “more favoured” (CM7), “have their own people working to get them money” (P6) and “bend the rules and work the system” (CM9).

The reality is that funds are bid for against strict criteria and all groups need to meet specific guidelines in order to access these. What also becomes clear is that much of the funding that is received in the town is directed at communities and groups working in areas where there is high unemployment, low achievement, poverty and overcrowding. Almost by default the areas that meet the criteria are populated primarily by BME groups, particularly those with high numbers of people from the South Asian community and therefore tend to receive the grants and secure funding applications. It appears then that not only at a local level but on a national basis we have a social administration system that systematically disadvantages white residents because they rarely meet these issues on a demographic basis.

There is objective reality of progressive shifting of communities and changing domination of markets – both legitimate and illegitimate. Power and oppression becomes a daily reality for those who have to negotiate social spaces and limited resources. This has an impact on the view that is held by communities of service providers whereby those that feel most disadvantaged by the increasing population of disadvantaged areas feel that they are viewed as a “dumping ground”.

Looking at the demographics of Luton and its make up it is important to acknowledge that whilst BME poverty is concentrated in different areas of the town, poverty amongst many White British families according to the poverty index cannot always be identified unless data is gathered at neighbourhood level. This group generally do not receive the recognition they deserve in terms of services as these families are dispersed across the length and breadth of the town and do not register on the ward data sets when looking at the most disadvantaged families.

This area is interesting particularly for young people in terms of identity formation as it links back to fragile identities and how these can be easily threatened. The young people then seek to re-establish their own identities when faced with challenge or competition which is often determined by the older members of the community.

## **7.7 Implications for Interventions**

Finally the data looked at securing some knowledge on what are the implications for intervention at the levels of policy and practice in view of the nature of the conflict and the perceptions of key figures in the local community.

The data brought out a number of suggestions from both the young people and the adults involved in the research. Whilst these may be feasible to implement at a local level and with the commitment of local people the

challenges for sustaining these are complex both at a local and a national level. Locally, funding is allocated according to justified criteria and is often linked to priorities. This issue although real and alive for those involved in it equates to a small percentage of the population of the town against the priorities of a larger percentage of the town. In addition the threat of conflict lies within two cultural groups and in a town where they are only two of over a hundred different community groups the issues may be accepted but are unlikely to get sustained attention.

On a national level acknowledgement of inter racial conflict is more challenging and is often sidestepped because the threats are focussed on cohesion or national security threats associated with terrorism and far right activity. National media attention in terms of disadvantaged and disassociated BME groups is not acknowledged until there is a national issue. Conflict, violence and disorder associated with BME groups is usually discussed when it is about riots, black on black violence, gun and weapon crime or racism; within these though there is no acknowledgement of inter racial conflict.

The Luton incidents of inter racial conflict rarely made the national press; indeed one of the only national incidents of inter racial violence that make national headlines was the Birmingham Riots in 2005 which occurred on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October and during the 2011 riots. The riot originated from racial tensions between Black and Asian communities. As in Luton this appears to have been an ongoing problem and as always an issue waiting to

explode so any possible spark of information against the other whether truthful or not can instigate a conflict between the two.

Although the Birmingham riots were reported nationally they did not open the debate on a national level in terms of inter racial conflict. Again as stated previously in the larger national concerns inter racial conflict is not an issue that gets onto government agendas and as such there is no consideration made on tackling this issue, determining any policy directives or agreeing some practical responses.

In the next chapter I discuss a range of interventions that can be utilised for managing and reducing inter racial youth conflict. These have been borne out of the data gathered and the analysis of that data along with the many voices captured throughout the research.

## **Chapter 8.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The introductory part of the thesis set out an aim which the researcher presented by saying:

“By understanding how these conflicts evolve, we might develop strategies, which divert young people away from these violent confrontations, thereby diverting them away from involvement in the criminal justice system, whilst at the same time offering greater protection to the potential victims. Beyond this we might also go some way to resolving the conflicts that exist between different young people”.

Having considered a range of literature, undertaken practice based research with young people and considered the views of a number of ‘adults’ some information has materialised that offers a way forward for developing the practice of those that work within this area of conflict.

The research set out to hear the voices of the young people and they were keen to put across suggestions regarding the type of activities that should take place. They made a number of ideas that were consistent with what many of the youth workers and community members were saying. The ideas coming from the young people were primarily aimed at bridging gaps which are all important in their own way but very much isolated from each other. Holistic approaches to tackling inter racial conflict locally need to be taken and as such tackling the issues cannot be done in isolation from an acceptance of the issue, the external influences that exist and the structural challenges. Some of the suggested areas that need to be addressed alongside the implementation of projects to tackle the issues of identity and inter racial conflict for young people are as follows:-



- Acknowledgement of the Issue
- External Influences – Parents – Community and Faith Leaders
- Structural Challenges - Local Authority and Policing
- Focussed Targeted Activities and the role of the Youth Worker

### **8.1 Acknowledgement of the Issue**

It was clear that throughout the research there were issues of concern from both the community groups being studied and whilst many of the Chief Officers, Heads of Service and Practitioners believed that there were areas of conflict that existed it was also very clear that they had no comprehension about the intensity of some of these issues, the historical origins that had come into play or the stories of their personal experiences. It was very clear that there were deep wounds and hurts held with many more of the African Caribbean community about the differential treatment they had experienced at the hands of the police and the council over many years.

In addressing these there needs to first be an acknowledgement by those working with these communities that inter racial conflict is ongoing and bubbling all the time. It was said in the study that this remains an ongoing issue that may lie dormant but never goes away. It emerges only when something triggers it which more often than not results in violence and it is at this point that the services take notice. There needs to be more of a holistic approach to engaging with the community groups and on an ongoing basis not just when we have problems.

We need to introduce mechanisms that allow the African Caribbean community to feel that their concerns are being heard. There also needs to be some

strategy formation that ensures that people can see some change in the issue they have identified. Even it is a long term plan it needs to have a reporting mechanism to the community so they can see the changes and feel that they are being heard. If we don't acknowledge the years of hurt and frustrations that they feel on a local level they will continue to pass these onto the young members of their community and they will continue to be carriers of people who believe that the council and the police are not interested in them and that they can be marginalised at the expense of the South Asian community.

Within the South Asian community there are feelings of frustration where they believe that they are held responsible for actions that do not necessarily have anything to do with them personally. Many of them accept that socially structural decisions have an impact on outcomes.

To address these recommendations we need to consider the role of identity for young people and how this impacts on the conflicts that arise with other community groups because of their own personal and social experiences. Identity formation is ever evolving and fragile and can be influenced by these experiences; resulting in different ways of which one addresses conflict with other cultural groups.

## **8.2 External Influences**

The research data collected and the analysis highlights the role of parents, community and faith leaders as being influential in young people's identity formation and in their ability to sustain conflict between different cultures.

Whilst it is accepted these are difficult areas to challenge there is room to negotiate the use of more powerful and positive conversations.

### **Inter Generational Work – Bridging the Gap – Dispelling the Myths**

The concept of inter generational work is usually considered to be about interaction between different generations. The research has evidenced a range of instigators for the conflict that maintains between the groups being studied. There are numerous unresolved issues and the need for dialogue appears to be a necessity although this needs to be done sensitively and over time.

There are however a number of inter generational conversations that need to happen that are not just across the generations but across the cultural groups. The combinations of conversations that need to happen to make a change in the issues identified in this study need to be happen with:-

- South Asian Elders and African Caribbean Elders
- South Asian Elders and African Caribbean Young People
- South Asian Elders and South Asian Young People
- African Caribbean Elders and African Caribbean Young People
- African Caribbean Elders and South Asian Young People
- African Caribbean Young People and South Asian Young People

Whilst this research has gone some way to hear the voices of the young people and some of the community members it has not yet resolved the historical hurts that the Elders from both the African Caribbean and South Asian community hold about each other. These hurts seem to be deep rooted from the conversations that were heard by the researcher and in light of this there need to be opportunities for them to discuss some of these with each other. There is some importance to exploring this area of work whilst challenging and breaking

down myths. We need to do this with both young people and the elders otherwise we may find that young people's views on one hand may shift through positive interventions but be challenged and undone because the parents or grandparent's views have not changed.

We need to consider strategies for bringing people together in a range of different ways to tackle the historical issues, dilute the myths and then develop positive experiences of others; otherwise all work we do with young people who are involved in or are at risk of being involved in inter racial conflict or violence will be tenuous.

There are good examples of inter generational work both locally and nationally; many of which are highlighted in the Government's Generations Together Programme. For this study the challenge for implementing this work across the group combinations identified above are going to be difficult however commitment needs to be made to do this work. This is already situated in a good place where locally it has already been identified that the majority of people get on well together and that some of the initiatives already implemented help to bring people and communities together. The town has some good community leadership and numerous committed people. With these things already in place the next steps will be to embrace some of the issues identified from this research and to plan local responses to creating safe spaces for those that need to talk, express and share some of the things that have been barriers which enable conflict to take place. Those that share their stories need to be open to truths, challenges and change.

## **Community and Faith Leaders**

Nationally and locally community and faith leaders exist not only in peaceful times but also in times of conflict. Certainly when many of the issues associated with BME young people are portrayed in the media the community and faith leaders emerge as spokespeople to give an overview of what has taken place, the reasoning behind the issues and what needs to be done.

There is certainly a role for these people but what became very evident throughout the research was whether these people could speak for the majority of the community. Young people in particular were critical of the role of these people saying that many of them did not represent or even understand their views. In many cases they did not even recognise the people that had been selected or self selected to these roles. Often the leaders were drawn from churches and mosques in their role as Pastors or Imams.

What the research seems to highlight as a recommendation is that there is something that needs to be done to develop opportunities for youth people to become community leaders; equipping them with the skills and abilities to speak with authority on the issues that young people have from their own experience of being part of those groups.

Youth Leaders have emerged across the country in different circumstances covering a diversity of issues but they seem to rarely be given opportunities for engagement when there are cultural conflicts. Young people can be trained as

peer educators and peer mediators and utilised in a range of ways to work with and support other young people. They can also become community leaders; with many going on to be community youth workers. The researcher recommends harnessing opportunities for making young people more active in their communities as leaders and drawing on their expertise in times of conflict.

### **8.3 Structural Challenges**

The research shows that while immigration and economic competition can raise levels of racial conflict; the national and local policies implemented can also have an effect on the increase in racial tensions. There is a need for regeneration as identity formation is likely to be much more threatened when there is a real struggle for limited resources. In terms of gaining more resources nationally practitioners, police or even the council may not be able to do this directly but they do have the ability to lobby and debate the issues.

The research highlighted the need for agencies to not only acknowledge the multifaceted issues associated with inter racial conflict but to understand where those issues not only come from but why they continue to remain. There is a role for numerous organisational changes however the two that emerged time and time again throughout the research were aimed directly at the council in terms of allocation of funds and the police in terms of how different sections of the community are treated.

## **Local Authority**

Managing local budgets lies within the hands of the council and pooled budgets with a range of different partners. Funding allocation needs to be more open, transparent and clearer. Having community representation on application approval and funding allocation panels can help with this. Being more creative with the distribution of local funding and how it is applied for needs to be changed. Community groups' funding should have a revised criterion that promotes partnership working and links to cohesion to remove the ability of self interest groups to access large pots of money at the expense of others.

The issues raised consistently throughout the research about allocation of funding to community groups were borne out in the Luton Commission's work on Community Cohesion. The report found that the most common theme mentioned as a barrier to mistrust of other communities was resources. The report said:

"This theme was applied to a number of different situations. The first was simply around lack of resources for specific groups and how this impacts on communities. The second is how many of the groups or organisations compare their lack of resources against others who appear to have been more successful in gaining resources. The third situation is whether or not there is equal access to those resources which are in place" (LBC 2011).

It was evident that the unequal allocation of resources was thought to be responsible for different communities becoming polarised and was frequently given as a reason why people do not mix. The policies around funding allocation and implementation need to be revised in light of the concerns and issues raised not only in this research but in the wider debates that have taken place

## **Policing**

It was clear that many young people had issues about how policing takes place when it comes to young people. However Black and African Caribbean young people were more hostile about their relationships with the police. This was based on historical stories of others, personal experience of going through the criminal justice system, personal experience of being arrested and released and observation of how others from their community are treated.

Although there were some stories of similarity from the South Asian young people they were not as aggressive in their comments about the police. The focus of the policing issues in terms of identity and inter racial conflict that occurs in this is about disparity in treatment. The research brought out the strong views from the African Caribbean young people about the preferential treatment that is afforded to the South Asian young people. They had their own reasons for this taking place which they aligned to the police being fearful of upsetting the South Asian community and the communities ability to play the system and bend the rules; even though there was no real substantial evidence to support this. What was clear was that the Kamran incident had been a turning point for how the African Caribbean young people, their families and the African Caribbean community viewed policing of their young people when it came to investigating incidents associated with them.

The researcher was afforded the opportunity to talk to a few of the young people who were found guilty of offences associated with Kamran's death. The



message that came out again and again was that it was not meant to be that way and had the police dealt with previous incidents when they had been attacked the opportunity for a repercussion would not have taken place. They re-iterated time and time again about police attending incidents where they and the South Asian young men had been in disputes and that every time the police attended they (the African Caribbean young men) would get arrested and taken to the station. The South Asian young men would either be allowed to leave or had their names taken and told that they would be in touch. They held deep seated resentments that the police always thought they were the instigators. The South Asian community can "get away with murder" was said by several of them.

Whilst policing young people in Luton has changed dramatically in the last few years the research has clearly identified that there is some work that the police need to do with many of the African Caribbean young people to address historical issues that have an impact on the way that they carry out their work now. The injustices of the past have created a barrier that blocks many young people from this community from seeing the positive things that are being done because they are captured in these negative views ingrained into any contact they have with the police.

In order to move forward one of the recommendations coming out of this work would be for the police to understand how some of the historical issues associated with the way they have dealt with incidents related to the African Caribbean community have had an impact on how they view them now.

Opportunities for using some of the police community forums already in place should be utilised to explore not the issues of today but how previous incidents have created images of what can be expected in the present.

A lot of community policing takes place and local officers spend time in schools and youth clubs. Partnership working with these organisations where educational, recreational and social skills development takes place would be advantageous to officers working on the front line who could change the perceptions of officers and the misunderstandings about the culture of policing.

#### **8.4 Working with Young People - Activities**

Young people presented a number of tangible examples of things that they believed needed to be done to address some of the issues of inter racial conflict. Drawing on these and other ideas that emerged out of the research the recommendations fall into a number of categories

##### **Education**

The research data supported the academic research that identity is fragile particularly when young people feel that they are under attack. Dupuy (2008) says that:

In fragile contexts, delivering education may provide an entry point for donors to address political and governance issues. "Within a given context, education can help produce the benefits of inclusive and constructive integration of individuals and communities, socially, politically and economically, which can contribute to conflict prevention and long-term peace building".

Whilst there are hundreds of projects that seek to build community spirit and bring people to together enabling them to learn more about each other and ultimately build the cohesive communities that we are striving for; the flaw in this work is that it is done in isolation to other work and is short term and reactive. The work needs to be more holistic and embedded into the school or youth work curriculum. It needs to be financed on a long term basis and starts from a place that acknowledges that young people have identities that are ever changing and that in order to embrace cohesion work they must be secure in these identities to engage with one another.

The work around strengthening resilience needs to be developed and identified and young people need to be supported through this work where there are possibilities that they may be easy targets for right wing or extremist groups.

### **Music and Arts**

There is mileage in developing activities that bring young people together to educate them about misperceptions of each other's communities; but these need to be structured interventions

Young people spoke about music and the creative arts being universal languages that can enable exploration and learning. Using these practice models to facilitate engagement in a secure environment and where expression can be harnessed; young people from diverse communities can be brought together to learn about self and others with particular focus on identity and its

importance in creating self assured and confident young people. Young people often spoke about end products like creating media footage on compact discs that can be developed into training tools and materials that can be used by young people with their peers.

Encouraging young people to create their own cultural festivals and events and supporting them to plan and implement local events that celebrate difference and diversity.

### **Managing Conflict**

Opportunities for young people to talk about identity and about difference and about conflict should be encouraged. Managed sensitively they allow young people to share their stories whether they are positive or frustrating. Understanding other young people may show them that they have more in common than they think. We need to consider the use of alternative narratives whereby young people are able to undertake storytelling that educates others.

There needs to be more work around building young people's self esteem so that they are confident with whom they are and less likely to get into conflict situations with others or feel threatened about who they are. There is a huge amount of work that needs to be done with parents; either in isolation or with young people that seeks to bring some reality to the fact that they are often part of the problem.

## **The Role of Youth Workers**

The government's ten year strategy for developing positive activities with young people outlines the importance of creating opportunities for bridging the gaps between young people from different ethnic and faith groups. In the Prevent Strategy it says:

"Positive activities for young people and youth services can both help to build resilience and be a mechanism for supporting vulnerable young people through more targeted support and mentoring. Local authorities should ensure that their youth provision is sensitive to both culture and faith, and helps to bring young people of different backgrounds together. Youth workers can also be both mentors and role models for young people. Local authorities should take steps to raise the awareness and confidence of youth workers to be able to discuss issues around faith and identity openly with young people, and to know who to turn to if they have particular concerns or need advice" (2009)

With this in mind there is an important role for youth workers in being instrumental in dealing with some of the issues associated with inter racial conflict. Luton boasts some 400 voluntary and community sector organizations; maybe half of these working directly with young people. They range from the once a night each week for 3 hours to full time including weekends. Many of the groups are self interest groups serving only their own community and as such maintain the myths that different cultures have about each other. Some of the youth organisations have been known to do joint projects on an occasional basis; however these are few and far between. We need to find ways to develop opportunities to bring different cultural groups together to work with each other; creating spaces for them to break down misinformation and to challenge stereotypes.

Youth Workers across the town both in the statutory and voluntary sector across many of the diverse range of community and cultural groups that live in the town. It is through these connections that youth workers are in an advantageous position to support young people in projects that can help bring different cultures together.

The national schools linking project which operates in some of the primary schools in Luton could be considered as a good practice model for encouraging interactions between young people. The project aims to bring different school classes together in neutral place to explore what young people have in common as well as to understand differences through a range of activities. National research on the project has shown that the project can have a significant impact on cohesion.

The model could easily be adapted to youth clubs and centres and to small voluntary sector organisations catering for only one specific community as well as being extended out to high schools. There are a number of other projects like the Peterborough Unity Youth Project, the Sheffield Manor Young People's Health Project and The Allsorts Youth Project in Brighton which has been highlighted as good practice youth projects. The desire for many of these to be delivered and be successful lies with committed youth workers but also with directives through the head of service or service manager and to be embedded as an integral part of the programme rather than a one off session or an add on.

In addition youth workers need to be supported with training. An unpublished survey of youth services carried out by The National Youth Agency identified some challenges and issues which have implications for youth workers:

- Training and support for practitioners, in particular to address concerns about 'not getting it right'.
- Stronger integration of community work into youth work strategies and vice versa.
- Improving the quality and capacity of provision, staff skills and inter-agency relationships is central to the development of 'safe spaces' in which young people can explore issues, beliefs and fears.
- The recognition that young people from all sectors of the youth population are potentially vulnerable; raising aspirations – and supporting young people in achieving them – is therefore central to building resilience

National Youth Agency (2006)

We cannot talk about addressing issues of identity and conflict if we are not prepared to support and train those that work with young people in face to face contexts. This training needs to be prioritised if we want to equip the workers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to tackle the issues that young people are embroiled in.

## **8.5 Concluding Comments**

The research set about to ask if the personal and social identity development of young people could in some way affect relationships with other young people particularly those from a different culture group and would this in turn result in conflict. The research has established how complex identity formation is and even more so for those from a BME community. Identity is shaped by a number of variables and some of these results in dilemmas and conflict for young

people. Many of these will be worked through by young people but for others influence and experience play a significant part. Young men appear to be more at risk of conflict and less likely to be able to deal with this.

Conflict between different cultural and religious groups is often reduced by observers to 'irrational hatreds' which ignores the role of structural and social inequalities. In so doing these observers fail to recognise the historical, political, economic, cultural and developmental factors that are crucial elements of these conflicts. What we have seen is that for many young people identity formation is a complex task. Those who may be managing difficult issues may not yet have explored all of the identity options or alternatives. Yet "in order for the culturally different adolescent to achieve a stable self-identity, he or she must integrate the racial or ethnic identities with a personal identity" (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992).

Ethnic identity conflicts are multi-dimensional and many factors can contribute to successful resolution however we cannot wait until society and the political system change; we need to address this with BME young people now. Society needs to work on the development of a more inclusive and accepting style when dealing with young people from BME communities.

Additionally it has to be recognised that the research was conducted in only one area of the country; in the Eastern region of the UK and it is possible therefore that the same research conducted in a different area may have resulted in a different outcome. The research was undertaken in an area where it is very



diverse in terms of culture and where incidents of inter racial conflict have taken place between the two groups used for the case study; however the research methods could be applied to other minority ethnic groups and could draw out similar information which could then be utilised for consideration on how identity and adolescent development may be interlinked to inter racial conflict amongst young people in not only other parts of the country but where relevant in a European or International arena.

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